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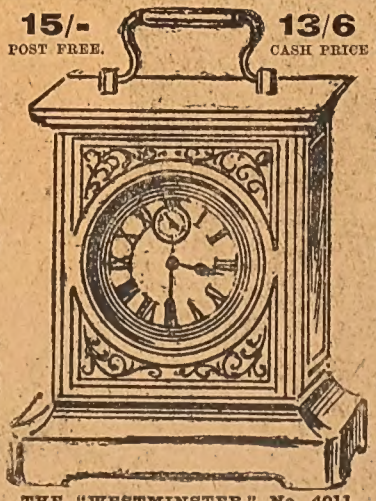

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 649.] For the Week Ending June 8th, 1901. [ONE PENNY.

Can Love be Bought

The nurse turned towards him, pistol in hand, and cried in a sad, plaintive voice: "All, all for love of him!" And then, suddenly turning the pistol against herself, she pulled the trigger and fell back, dead.

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CHAPTER I.

GRATITUDE OR LOVE?

"At times I feel that I shall be beaten. The struggle is very hard. When I came to London and entered at the hospital my father was alive; and though he was not rich, yet to all appearances he was in sufficiently easy circumstances to bear without privation the expenses of my professional training. But the preliminary fees had scarcely been paid when he died, and his affairs were in such an unsatisfactory state that my inheritance scarcely came to £50.

"I have tried to spend as little as possible, yet that money has gone to the last penny. I have eked it out as long as I could, and now I don't know which way to turn.

"I feel at times inclined to pick up a broom and sweep a crossing — anything to bring me the absolute necessaries for struggling on. Sometimes as I pass the jewellers' shops, all ablaze with their treasures, I am tempted to steal. It is a blessing there is some difficulty in dishonesty —poverty and want have such a vexatious effect on moral rectitude.

"If I had only the money to complete my training, I feel I have the brains to gain success. I have an allowance of £20 a year; but what is this, though I contrive ever so artfully?"

PLEASE

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The speaker was a young man who was only nineteen, though at times he looked considerably older than his age.

His was a fine face, with strongly marked features and a noble intellectual brow, his dark grey eyes were full of thought, his mouth had power and resolution marked in all its lines, and though its expression was mobile, changing from a sweet smile to firm set look of unshakable determination, there was character marked in everyone of its variations.

It was a warm evening in June, and he was sitting on one of the benches on the Thames Embankment facing the river. The evening was creeping on, and the sun's rays were casting large shadows and the heat of the day was gradually giving way to a softer and enjoyable atmosphere. The young man had removed his hat to partake of the soothing influence of the gentle breeze that played about his head. His words were addressed to a young woman sitting by his side, who by the shape of her bonnet and cloak and white cuffs could easily be distinguished as a professional nurse.

She had large, dark eyes, an irregularly shaped nose, and full lips, and it did not require a very acute observer to detect that she must be some years her companion's senior.

She could not be called handsome, though her eyes, changeful in their expression from the brightest vivacity to keen, almost passionate, sympathy, gave a powerful attractiveness to her face.

Her veil was thrown back and her hands were joined in her lap as she sat listening with a rapt expression of interest on her face to the rather despairing words of her companion.

"Will you listen patiently to me, Duncan," she said. "I met you at the hospital. I saw how hard you worked, I felt you were struggling against adverse circumstances, you had all my sympathy long before we became friends."

"Yes," he answered, "from you alone have I received sympathy. You seem to believe in me, and such a feeling is always flattering. You encourage me in my darkest moments and communicate to me your hopeful spirit. Yes, yes, I can say truly you have been my friend."

"Well," continued the nurse, "I can now speak to you quite openly. I have watched you carefully. I am sure you are one of the few men who are born for success. I am older than you," she blushed as she said this, "and I have thought that as it is my calling to nurse people generally, that it falls within my duty to minister to your mental distress. We have seen a good deal of each other and I have a real sisterly affection and regard for you."

She blushed again more vividly than before, and much more confusedly than a declaration of sisterly regard would seem to demand.

"And now I want to say something, which, after what I have said, will not, I hope, seem to you impertinent. I want to say that I feel so much confidence in you that I wish to lend you the money necessary to complete your studies; I have three hundred pounds, which were left me by my parents. You see, like you, I am an orphan without a single relation in the world. I earn more than enough for all my wants. Do let me help you! After all it will only be an investment, and I know you well enough to be sure it will be a safe one."

The young man, regardless of the publicity of the place, caught hold of both her hands.

"How good and kind you are; how noble!" he exclaimed, "but I cannot, dare not, accept such a sacrifice of friendship and devotion."

The chance meant so much to him that his mind naturally exaggerated the generosity of the offer.

"What have I done to deserve such self-sacrifice? Noble, noble is your offer. I know little of women; study has taken up all my thoughts. I have no leisure for amusement, or to enjoy myself in the society of your sex, yet I am sorely tempted if you can really spare the money, to be mean enough to accept it. Your offer almost appears like a direct interposition of Providence in my affairs, and I shall be proud to look back on your generosity, and owe my success to you."

He stopped for a few moments and earnestly looked at his companion, and then went on:

"You said just now you were older than I, the difference can only be two or three years at the most.

"You said your generous offer was dictated by a sisterly love. I know little what love for one of your sex means—sisterly or otherwise. I know I feel when I am with you a restful repose from present trouble, and a great hope for the future.

"I am sure that must be love. I always am anxious to discuss with you the anxieties of to-day and my plans of to-morrow. I have heard talk which entirely absorbs the mind, distracting it from work, and unfitting it for study. Such a passion could never be mine—yet I feel that I wish that I had someone to associate with my success, so that all my efforts might not be entirely selfish, for to work for oneself alone, even though science be one's mistress, is a form of selfishness, and doubly so, when one uses a profession only as a means to gain a position. I feel I am not expressing myself clearly. I wish to make you understand that for some time I have connected you with all my schemes.

"I am sure you are laughing at me. You shake your head—you are not.

"You offer me now the means of maintaining the fight, and I believe of securing victory. I will take it, but not from a sister, but from someone far dearer, who will share with me later on the fruits of success, a success you have a share in, a success that will be doubly dear to me because it is gained for you.

"Is this a bargain?" he questioned eagerly, "will you when I have won a position, share it with me as my wife?"

His companion's face was lighted up with excessive gladness.

She had been interested in the hard-working student; she had sympathized with him in his struggles, pitied him in his privation.

She had longed to be his friend, and once his friend, she soon discovered that she took a passionate interest in all that concerned him.

Hers was a wild, headstrong nature, partly warped from straightforwardness by a violent temper, an unhappy childhood, and unsympathetic surroundings.

She had struggled with her violent temper, she had tried strong religion, but she was wanting in pious conviction. She had adopted nursing as a sort of self-sacrifice; she was constantly endeavouring to put curbs on herself, and now love, born of pity—a love full of gentleness—had come to this wilful woman, a love for which she was ready to sacrifice herself in anything, and for which even sacrifice became changed into a voluptuous joy. She was five years older than the young

REMEMBER

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student, but chance had rendered her necessary to him, and her heart seemed bursting with the fulness of her happiness.

Her voice was modulated to a tone of exquisite softness, as she answered:

"Duncan, I have loved you for some time. I only know when I first discovered it, it had then become a part, I might almost say the absorbing whole, of my life. I scarcely hoped you cared for me otherwise than as a friend. When I offered to assist you, I never expected to hear that you really cared for me as you say you do; still, I am so pleased—so overjoyed! But listen, dear; we must part for some time. It will be a cruel trial for me, but I want to make sure you really love me. I—I shall never change. But you are young and—a man. Time will soon pass, as we shall both work looking forward to the future. A medical man, even when he has all his degrees, needs capital to start in his profession—we must both bear that in mind. Let us say we will part for six years."

"No, no!" answered the young man. "Why should this be necessary; why should I change. I plight you my word."

"I don't want you to be rash," she rejoined quickly. "I wish you to thoroughly understand what you have proposed in a moment of excitement. I don't want you to sell yourself for three hundred pounds," and seeing a flush rise to his face she slightly changed her rather peremptory tone and said: "Why, in six years you will still be young to marry, and I promise you that if you still wish to, you shall hear from me before the time of probation is past."

"Hear from you," he repeated. "Why, of course, we shall write to each other; it will be such a pleasure for me to let you know all about my progress."

"No, Duncan," she returned, "I wish you to be quite free from my influence. If you really love me as I wish you to, neither absence nor time will alter you. I will not be married out of gratitude."

Her large eyes flashed fiercely.

"You are neither weak nor changeable by nature," she went on, "six years is not such a long time for you to give up wholly to study. You must make a great name. I am very ambitious for you; I wish to have a great pride in you. On my side I shall not be idle. I shall gain money. I am determined that you are to become one of the greatest and most influential doctors in London before you are thirty."

She got up from the seat by the river.

"I must be back at the hospital," she said. "I will post you the money in notes to-night—to-morrow I leave London."

"But you will give me your address," he urged.

"No, for the present I shall be a vanishing lady—remember that mystery adds charm to romance. Though absent I shall hear of you, though you will not know how. In the meanwhile, if I should die, you will, I know, always think of me kindly; if, on the other hand, I live and you remain faithful to me—absolutely faithful, mind—you shall hear from me, and I will give you a chance of fulfilling your engagement. Remember my love is my life, I am too proud to ask you to be true to me. If you were false," and the fire of her glance seemed to burn up the tears that stood in her eyes. "I—I," and then suddenly conquering her emotion she said without finishing her sentence: "Oh, here we are at the hospital. Good-bye——"

She was gone in a minute, leaving the young student astonished and bewildered.

Conflicting emotions struggled within him.

He felt now the future was his—yet this future he owed entirely to the timely interposition of a woman. He tried to persuade himself that as she was now his engaged wife, the assistance she offered he could accept without mental humiliation, but he could not shut his eyes to the fact that this engagement had followed her offer, and probably would never have been entered into had she not made this offer.

He had thought little of love; he could not argue if he was in love or not; he could only compare how feeble was his feeling for her with the unconcealed force of her passion for him.

He was almost alarmed as he reflected on her vehemence. The strangeness of her scheme, the mystery of the six years probation were like incidents in the "Arabian Nights."

That evening he neglected his books as he sat pondering in his garret over the events of his interview with her.

He lay awake long into the night, his brain conjuring up marvellous sequels to the day's adventure.

His dreams were an indistinct repetition of his thoughts.

It was not till dawn was rapidly putting night to flight that he slept soundly, and awoke much later than usual with almost a certainty that the whole affair was a dream.

But on getting up, he found that a letter had been pushed under his door, and on opening the envelope, in addition to a few scribbled words, he found that it contained three Bank of England notes, each of a hundred pounds.

It was a careless, reckless way of sending the money, thoroughly characteristic of the sender.

On the slip of paper which was inclosed, were the following words:

"Farewell, perhaps for six years, perhaps for ever.—Agatha Manton."

CHAPTER II.

A Successful Man.

Over five years have passed since the events recorded in the last chapter took place, and in five years' time brings many changes in the short span which is reckoned as the life of man.

The youth, Duncan Gordon, who was then only one of the numerous students of St. Christopher's Hospital, is now an M.D. of London and an M.R.C.S.

He had highly distinguished himself in his examinations, and had established for himself a reputation as one of the coming men.

Fortune had smiled brightly on him, and fortune has much to do with success in life.

It had happened that, a year before this chapter opens, an operation had to be performed on a statesman, whose life was suddenly menaced by an insidious disease. The celebrated Sir Cuthbert Cutwell was to operate, and he had chosen young Duncan Gordon, who had been his favourite pupil, to assist him.

Already the illustrious patient was under the influence of the anæsthetic administered by a celebrated specialist; already the famed surgeon had the knife in his hand, when his hand was seen to tremble, and at this

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critical moment he was struck down with a slight fit of apoplexy.

Amid the general consternation young Gordon preserved his presence of mind, and rose to the importance of the crisis.

He seized the knife which had fallen from the master's hand, and, with perfect coolness, carried out the difficult and complicated operation, his nerve hard as iron, his hand true as the magnet to the Pole.

This operation had only twice before been performed with success. Thus the young doctor added one more victory to science, and sprang with a bound from obscurity to fame.

The medical papers, the political papers, the world of science, the world of fashion, rang with his name, and the rise from a house surgeon at St. Christopher's to a fashionable doctor, with a house in Cavendish Square, was accomplished in a few months; from a poorly paid drudge to a world-renowned specialist, with a line of private carriages drawn up in front of his residence at the hours when he saw his patients; from attendance on paupers to pocketing large fees from wealthy valetudinarians, and receiving large sums for each operation he performed. All this was a change brought about with a rapidity almost as sudden as the shifting of Aladdin's wonderful palace.

We all of us adapt ourselves quickly to the present; we throw off the past as an adder its skin.

An evil lived through is almost immediately an evil forgotten. Poverty becomes a dream to be moralized over in our sentimental moments, and the past want of comfort is only remembered with a kind of sigh when luxury palls with its excess.

Dr. Duncan Gordon had been so taken up with hard work that he had had little time for sentiment.

Of course, at times his mind reverted to Agatha Manton, but as years went on and no news came from her, the memory of the parting with her took an indistinct form, and when he thought of her she seemed as one long since dead. He almost felt that he had entered into an engagement with a being of another world; yet he held faithfully to his contract.

He never associated with women otherwise than in his professional capacity, and even then his reserve was of an ultra-professional description.

He faithfully recognised that he owed his position and brilliant prospects to that strange woman, who, after administering to him help and encouragement when he was despairing, had faded from his path.

He had given her a pledge which he was ready to keep should she ever appear to remind him of his engagement. Sometimes he fancied to himself that this compact would cease when six years should have passed from the time of their parting; but his stricter honour would hear of no compromise—he was bound to her for life and must keep himself free for her whenever she chose to claim him.

He had long since convinced himself that in his case gratitude had assumed the guise of love; he knew his heart beat with no passion when he thought of her, nor did a particle of romance associate her as being a necessity of his life. He was engaged to the inevitable—to a kind of memory.

Her appearance even was an indistinct image, all but those large, flashing, passionate eyes—those he felt sure he would recognise anywhere.

The day on which we present Dr. Duncan Gordon to our readers, he had finished with his London patients. It was half-past one, and the afternoon he had reserved for a special case he had to see out of town.

He made a hasty lunch for he had no time to waste, as he had promised to be at Sommerleigh at four, which did not allow more than three-quarters of an hour before he must catch a train at Waterloo.

Dr. Duncan Gordon's horses were some of the best in London, but the traffic on Waterloo Bridge was congested, and on arriving at the station he had only just time to get his ticket and take his seat in a first-class carriage, when the engine uttered its shrill shriek and steamed out of the station.

Dr. Gordon gave a sigh of relief; punctuality in keeping appointments was a virtue of the first importance in his mind, and he was pleased to think he should not have to keep the local doctor he had promised to meet in consultation, waiting. At Sommerleigh, a carriage was at the station in readiness for the London doctor, and he was quickly driven to a handsome old country house, standing in extensive and well-wooded grounds. On reaching the house, Dr. Gordon was shown into a comfortable study where the local doctor was waiting for him.

"A very serious case, Dr. Gordon," commenced the local doctor, "the patient has long been ailing, but it is only quite recently I have discovered any alarming symptoms. I own I am rather puzzled, and am pleased we have been able to obtain your advice. We have had a nurse for the patient for over two years; a very clever woman indeed, and I regret she is not here to-day, unfortunately she has been suddenly called to London on some family business. Somehow I fancy, that owing to her absence, my patient has been a little neglected—certain it is I found him much worse—so much worse that I told his daughter I should like a specialist to see him.

"She left the matter in my hands, and I telegraphed immediately to you, and I consider we were very fortunate in being able to secure your presence on such short notice."

The doctor then entered fully into his patient's ailments.

"I had better see the gentleman," answered Dr. Gordon, "from what you say I fear an operation will be necessary."

The local doctor got up and rang the bell, requesting the servant to see if they could go up.

"One of the maids here," he explained to Dr. Gordon "has taken the nurse's place during her absence—unfortunately she does not return till the last train to-night, and, as she has left no address, I have not been able to telegraph to her to hurry her up."

The two medical men then ascended the thickly carpeted stairs and entered the sick room, where their patient, almost in an insensible state, was stretched on the bed.

Apparently he was a man of about sixty; his face was worn with suffering, his skin was of a deadly whiteness, and in general appearance there was little to decide whether the figure on the bed was still really alive.

Dr. Gordon made a rapid examination of the sick man.

He was obliged for information to depend largely on what the doctor and the maid told him, as the patient seemed hardly to understand what was passing around him.

THE

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Once he wearily opened his eyes, but only to immediately close them again.

"A pity the nurse is not here," ejaculated Dr. Gordon in a vexed tone. "However, I have seen enough for the present to form a very decided opinion. If you will come downstairs, doctor, I should like to have a chat over the case with you."

When they were again in the study Dr. Gordon, with a very serious expression on his face, said:

"As you led me to suppose, the case is one in which I fear the worst is to be apprehended. I agree with you entirely on the general diagnosis, but I fancy there is some interior mischief which has escaped your notice. I feel certain that there have been certain symptoms which have not been called to your attention, but which the nurse must have remarked," and the London specialist entered into certain medical details.

The local doctor listened with an air of astonishment, and even with some incredulity.

"She would have been sure to tell me if anything of the kind had occurred," he said. "She is very clever, and remarkably attentive. I have had absolute confidence in her."

Dr. Gordon shook his head distrustfully. "She must have noticed the symptoms I refer to," he said positively; "they must have attracted her attention if she has the most elementary knowledge of nursing."

"Yes, yes," answered the local man, "if they occurred."

"There is no doubt in my mind they have," said Dr. Gordon authoritatively, "and for some time past you would have recognised, if you had known of them, that an operation was necessary."

"Of course, of course," assented the doctor.

"Now the patient is so weak," continued the young specialist, "that this operation will be a most critical affair. However, if it is not performed the patient cannot live a week; he may die at any moment, even before the operation can be executed, but I think that we may delay till to-morrow, so as to get a first-class man down from London to give the anæsthetic, for this will be a delicate business."

"Yes, **certainly**," agreed his *confrère*.

"I will, therefore, if this course be decided on," went on Dr. Gordon, "telegraph immediately to Dr. Eather, and will at the same time make arrangements with a friend of mine to see my patients **to-morrow** morning, as I shall stay here over the operation. Dr. Eather will be here to-morrow by ten, or will send someone we can rely on. I had better likewise wire to St. Christopher's for another nurse."

"Yes," replied the other doctor, "but our nurse will be back to-night, and our patient, Mr. Warwick, when she is here, will have nobody else to do anything for him. She has a wonderful influence over him."

"As you like," answered Dr. Gordon, "but a man in Mr. Warwick's state ought to have two nurses."

"There can be no harm in getting another nurse down," said the local doctor doubtfully. "I will ring the bell and tell the servant to ask Miss Warwick to come in, so she may hear what you advise."

Dr. Gordon nodded and sat down to the table to write out the necessary telegrams, while the other doctor gave the servant the message for his mistress.

The London doctor was still engaged with his telegrams when the door of the room opened and, looking up from his work, he saw a girl enter.

At first his was a vacant stare, such as a man engaged in any occupation gives when he is disturbed, but the look of preoccupation soon gave way to one of sympathetic interest as he examined the girl.

She came into the room rather nervously and seemed relieved when she had reached the side of Dr. Raynham the local practitioner. Her face wore a questioning expression—a sort of look of dependence and trust that sought advice.

She was about seventeen, developing rapidly into the grace of early womanhood, shyly conscious of the fact and girlishly ashamed of her own responsibility.

She knew that she was lovely; if her looking-glass had not told her so, the expression of every man she met must have let her into the secret, but she had not yet

"You—you!" he exclaimed, "and is it thus we meet again?" He had recognised . . . Agatha Manton.

GOLDEN

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gained the assurance which allows a woman to undergo admiration with composure.

Her soft brown hair glinted in the rays of the afternoon sun that stole in with rich light through the painted glass of the study windows. Her large blue eyes were wide open in their inquiring glance, and were full of that sympathy which softens a woman's look almost to angelic tenderness.

Her lips were slightly parted, disclosing her small, regular, pearly teeth. There was a slight blush on her cheeks which contrasted with the soft, delicate whiteness of her skin.

She wore a loose, flowing house-gown, which had evidently been made for some time, as it was now too short for her, and disclosed not only a delicate high-instepped foot in a pretty slipper, but a neat ankle also, and even the outward curving of the black hose over the instep.

All this Dr. Gordon noticed in a much shorter time than it has taken to write or even to read, and he rose stiffly from his seat as Dr. Raynham, taking the girl's hand in the manner of an old friend, who had known her before young-ladydom days, and who still, after the fashion of old people, looked on her as a child, as she was when he first knew her, led her towards his London colleague. The state of the case was briefly described to the girl, both doctors insisting on the urgent necessity of the operation.

Miss Warwick seemed reluctant to arrive at a decision.

"Had we not better wait and hear what the nurse says when she returns?" she questioned.

"My dear young lady," returned Dr. Raynham, "Dr. Gordon's time is precious. There must be no hesitation, if your father's life is to be saved."

"Will you let me leave everything in your hands, Dr. Raynham?" said Violet Warwick.

"Certainly," he returned, "and I put my authority into execution by deciding that the operation must be performed."

"I suppose there is some sort of inn in the village where I can get a bed?" asked Dr. Gordon.

"Unfortunately the nearest hotel is at some distance," said Raynham.

"Of course, you will stay here, Dr. Gordon," Violet suggested timidly. "I am sure my father would wish it, though I am afraid you will find it lamentably dull. Dinner will be ready at half-past six; we keep early hours down here. I hope, Dr. Raynham, you will be able to stay and keep Dr. Gordon company."

"I regret that it is impossible," answered the country practitioner. "I have several pressing cases I must see; I shall not finish my professional work till late. Should you want me in the night for any unexpected complication, don't hesitate to send for me, Dr. Gordon. You may depend on my being round early to-morrow morning. I will take your telegrams if you like; I shall have to pass the office. Good afternoon. I know I could not leave you in better hands," and Dr. Raynham climbed into his gig, which was waiting for him, and rattled off.

A servant showed Dr. Gordon into a comfortable bedroom, and when the maid had left him he threw himself into an easy chair and carefully thought over the case he had been called to see, and the result of his reflections was far from complimentary to the professional skill of Dr. Raynham.

It was a nuisance he could not get back to London, but he was interested in this case and not quite satisfied that there was not something in the back-ground which he was determined to ferret out.

He was still in his chair when he heard a knock at the door, and the servant obeying his "come in" informed him that dinner was served and that Miss Warwick was waiting for him.

"What! Half-past six already!" ejaculated the doctor, and hastily washing his hands, he descended to the dining-room.

Violet Warwick was the only occupant of the dining-room, except a staid old man-servant, who stood behind her chair. With a short apology the doctor took the seat which was prepared for him.

"If you are late it is my fault," Violet replied. "Since father has been ill we do not sound the gong; I ought to have sent up to you before."

The table was richly laid with old-fashioned silver plate and delicate cut glass, and from a conservatory which opened into the dining-room, the soft green of palms and ferns, and the perfumes of sweet-scented flowers gladdened both the senses of sight and smell.

Violet was dressed in a white *mousseline de laine*, and her delicate loveliness was set off to perfection by the soft, clinging folds of her simple drapery.

"I am very anxious about my father, Dr. Gordon," she said. "Dr. Raynham says you are almost a magician in your science. If you can only restore him to health, what an unpayable debt I shall owe you."

"The case is very serious," answered the doctor, "but by no means hopeless; I do not somehow fancy he has been properly nursed, and yet Dr. Raynham seems to have confidence in the attendant you have for him."

"Oh, yes, yes!" said the girl, looking about her as if she feared someone might be listening. "They all think nurse is deserving of every trust. She has full power here. I never interfere with her, she has full authority. My father trusts her implicitly."

The girl spoke hurriedly, and as if in terror of something, more as if she were uttering a lesson she had learnt than the expression of her own feelings.

The doctor noticed this, and still intent on his purpose, stuck to the point.

"Will you be quite frank with me, Miss Warwick. I almost fancy you are not quite so satisfied as the others with this nurse."

"Oh, don't say so," she returned quickly; "and who am I that I should give an opinion?"

The doctor did not press the matter further, but the girl had said enough to strengthen his unfavourable opinion of the nurse.

He was convinced there was something wrong.

He was becoming interested in the case and was very anxious to see this nurse, whose authority over the sick man, the doctor, and the whole household seemed all powerful.

"I shall have a good talk to her," he resolved. "I will let her know at once that it is no good trying to deceive me," and then turning to Violet, he said:

"Do you know, Miss Warwick, where this nurse received her professional training, and may I ask what her name is?"

"I think," the girl answered, "she was for some time at St. Christopher's Hospital, and her name is Miss Duncan."

"A strange coincidence!" ejaculated Dr. Gordon. "I was a student at St. Christopher's, and my Christian name is Duncan."

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CHAPTER III.

The Green-Eyed Monster.

The evening passed quickly for both Dr. Gordon and Violet Warwick. She had a pleasing, trustful manner, and the young people were soon on good terms, the doctor's reserve melting before her child-like simplicity. She showed him some of her drawings and spoke with enthusiasm of her favourite poets and authors.

There is a halo of glory and idealism round a lovely and pure woman. A girl in her innocence, scatters the coarse vapours of materialism as a bright sun the mists of the morning; she idealizes love, and is thereby herself idealized.

Dr. Gordon felt the subtle intoxication of admiration stealing to his brain. He fancied he detected the stirring motion of her breath as she leant across the table; the perfume of her hair stole over to him, making the blood throb in his pulses.

A man unaccustomed to woman's society is the more readily influenced when exposed to its alluring charms.

His eyes expressed his feeling. As Violet perceived his heightened colour and noticed his look of admiration, her eyes fell before his, and her face was suffused with blushes.

She could not explain what she experienced, it was all so new to her; she could not say if she was pleased or angry. She shrank back in her chair, almost frightened.

Poor child! She had never before had this unrestrained intercourse with any man except her father and old Dr. Raynham, and she had already admitted to herself that she thought Dr. Gordon to be good-looking, and she knew him to be clever.

They were both children in matters of the heart; he, with all his learning and professional skill, as much as she.

It was late, the hands of the clock had moved almost unnoticed; they had no idea that time had slipped by so quickly.

But as each of them realized the emotion which had arisen in them, an uneasy silence suddenly interrupted their conversation, and neither had the necessary self-command to clear the awkwardness of the situation by some trivial remark.

At this moment the silence, which was oppressing each of them, was interrupted by a knock at the hall door.

"It must be the nurse," said Violet, hastily rising.

The doctor noticed that Miss Warwick resumed, as it were instinctively, her former nervous manner, and the troubled look returned to her eyes.

The nurse, even while outside the door, appeared to assert her supreme influence.

All this struck Dr. Gordon, and he felt eagerly impatient for his interview with this important personage.

He began already to fancy she might resent his presence as an intrusion, since he had been called in without her consent being obtained.

She returned as mistress of the house, claiming admittance at the front door, not entering modestly by the servants' entrance, as he had expected, and her voice was soon heard, imperiously giving orders in the passage.

"The master's much worse, miss," said an obsequious servant's voice. "He was so bad that Dr. Raynham and Miss Violet telegraphed early this morning for a doctor from London."

"Indeed!" responded a hard, firm voice, "And all this without waiting for me!"

"Yes, miss, and the London doctor's come."

"Yes," returned the voice of the nurse. "And I hear, miss, an operation is to be performed to-morrow morning on the master. The London doctor is in there with Miss Violet."

Again a sharp "indeed" was ejaculated. There was a momentary silence, and then the nurse added in a lower tone of voice:

"I will see your master, and then I will have a talk with the doctor."

Violet looked up uneasily at Dr. Gordon; the expression on her face showed fear which was struggling with an evident desire of asserting her own authority. She seemed anxious that he should encourage her.

The door of the room was slightly ajar, and every word had been heard by them both distinctly.

"So that is the nurse," said Dr. Gordon, "she says she will talk to me; I likewise wish to have some very serious conversation with her."

"I acted for the best," said Violet, appealingly, the tears rising to her eyes. "I really thought another opinion was necessary. Directly she was gone, I urged Dr. Raynham to take decisive steps."

"You did quite right," said the doctor; "it was an imperative duty you fulfilled; if you had not done so your father could not have lived; this ought to have been done before, the nurse must have had warning of the nature of the case. She seems to have an almost unlimited influence both with your father and Dr. Raynham."

"Yes," answered Violet, looking down. "Father trusts her implicitly. I rarely see him now, she says I agitate him, and that he is always worse when I have been with him."

"There is something I do not quite understand," replied Gordon; "it is evident she has neglected her patient. I almost fancy——"

But before the doctor could explain himself further the old butler came into the room to inform Violet that Miss Duncan wished to see her.

The interview took place in the next room.

Only scattered fragments of the conversation reached Dr. Gordon, but it was impossible not to hear that the nurse was much put out, and after some moments he could not avoid hearing the nurse say: "I have just seen your father. He says, since an operation must be performed he wishes it delayed, as he has important business he wishes settled first. I have his authority to pay this London doctor his fee and dispatch him about his business. I thought Dr. Raynham had more judgment than to act so foolishly in my absence."

Then he heard that Violet was in great distress. He caught the words, "His life depends on it; he will die if there is any delay."

"Pooh, pooh!" returned the nurse scornfully, "doctors will say anything to pocket the fee for an operation. I am acting by your father's direct

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instructions, and, you may be sure, in his interest. Go to bed miss. I will see this doctor; he will not attempt to humbug me."

Dr. Gordon heard the outer door shut, and braced himself up for his interview.

He now felt certain that the nurse had some sinister motive for delaying the operation, the immediate performance of which was the only hope for prolonging Mr. Warwick's life.

He was determined to baulk her. He was a man of dogged resolution. He felt resolved to fight in Violet's interest; he had become enthusiastic in her behalf; it was a pleasure to be able to serve her.

He had made up his mind not to be daunted by the virago; he would, if necessary, apply to a magistrate, and expose her.

He had not much confidence in Dr. Raynham; he had read in a few minutes the man's weak character, and had discovered that he stood in awe of the nurse. But he reflected with some satisfaction that Dr. Raynham and Dr. Duncan Gordon were two very different persons.

He had a mind to commence the battle—to touch the electric bell and tell the servant he wished to see the nurse.

"Yes, that will be best," he reflected, and he carried out his intention.

The servant looked startled at the message, but did not offer any remark.

"I ought to have mentioned my name," thought Dr. Gordon. "Never mind, here she comes."

The door was opened; a shadow fell on the carpet.

"Strange," he thought, "she seemed to have character and determination enough. Why does she hesitate in the doorway?"

The visitation was only momentary, and was made up for by the quickness of her subsequent advance. Suddenly she stopped, exclaiming:

"You! Yes, I knew it was you from the first glance—altered, yes altered; but much as I figured you would be. Do you not know me?"

The doctor looked up like one in a dream. There was almost an expression of fear on his face as he returned the glance, and felt those dark eyes eating into his inmost thoughts and reading every impression in his mind.

"You—you," he exclaimed, "and is it thus we meet again?"

He had recognised that this nurse, against whom his thoughts were so strongly prejudiced, was no other than Agatha Manton.

CHAPTER IV.

A New Compact.

There was a short silence.

Miss Manton had seated herself on a low chair, her elbows on her knees, and her cheeks resting on her clenched fists.

After the silence had lasted for some minutes, she rose, and approaching him, said:

"I did not intend that we should meet, yet, but circumstances have been stronger than my will. I have heard of your success with pleasure; I was always sure of it."

He felt that her restless eyes were wandering over his face trying to read his thoughts. He answered:

"Yes, I have been successful, but I have not forgotten that I owe all to you."

"Sit down," she said, drawing her low chair close to him "tell me that you are pleased to see me. My only pleasure since we parted has been looking forward to the time when we should meet again."

She caught hold of his hand almost as if it were a child's and held it tightly clasped in hers, as if asserting her right to its possession.

He noticed that the outlines of her face had hardened and her eyes seemed to have acquired a harsh expression of resolution.

"I have remained faithful to you and my promise," he said. "I am, of course, ready to redeem my pledge when you wish."

"Not yet," she replied. "I shall not call on you for the fulfilment of your promise for some time yet, and I shall not come to you as a portionless bride."

The cruel suspicions the doctor had entertained before he had discovered the identity of the nurse, rushed back to his mind and took fresh force as he recalled her reticence and her suggestion of money she would have. It was impossible that she, one of the most skilful nurses of St. Christopher's, should not have noticed the symptoms which had never been communicated to Dr. Raynham.

He felt his face was betraying his thoughts, and he was conscious that her large dark eyes were fixed intently scrutinising him.

"Well?" she ejaculated, sharply and interrogatively.

"I was thinking of the sick man upstairs," he returned, almost in a tone of apology.

"Oh, yes," she answered quickly. "You have formed an exaggerated opinion of the gravity of his present state."

"That is impossible," returned the doctor.

She looked at him anxiously.

"Well, perhaps you are right," she said, "but the operation cannot take place to-morrow, as you have arranged."

"Time is precious," said the doctor. "I should not be doing my duty if I did not tell you very plainly that an immediate operation is the only chance of saving his life. Why should there be any delay?"

"Because he has decided that he will not have the operation take place to-morrow. I am directed to pay you your fee. You were sent for without his consent, and he wishes Dr. Lancet to operate. If there is really a necessity for such extreme measures, I am to send for him to-morrow."

"The patient upstairs must have improved wonderfully since I saw him to have been able to communicate so fully with you," he said. "Are you sure you clearly understood him? When I was with him he was unable to speak, and appeared almost wholly unconscious."

"He has great confidence in me, and I understand him," she answered.

"I must speak very seriously," said Dr. Gordon; "your local doctor, Dr. Raynham, and I went thoroughly into the case. We are of the same opinion as to the action to be taken. If you oppose us, are you aware that you are undertaking a very great responsibility?—that, in the case of the patient's death, Miss Warwick could, if she chooses, prefer a very serious charge against you, and this would be readily enough believed if it were proved that the operation were delayed for any private interest of your own."

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"And you dare to speak to me like this," she ejaculated.

"It is my duty," he replied firmly.

"Let Mr. Warwick explain before me and Dr. Raynham the purport of the message you gave me, and then no responsibility will rest with you."

"I can satisfy Dr. Raynham," she retorted.

"But I must be satisfied," he rejoined, "for your sake as well as for my own."

Perhaps for the first time in her life Miss Manton was baffled, and as she looked at the man before her, she, womanlike, admired him for his superiority over her.

"As you will," she answered submissively. "Mr. Warwick has over and over again expressed to me his desire that if an operation should be necessary it should be performed by Dr. Lancet, but since you have been sent for, and you think there is no time to be lost I will persuade him that he cannot have a more skilled operator than you. But you must put off the hour from ten till twelve. Mr. Warwick sent me on the journey from which I have just returned to ask his lawyer to come to him in respect to his will."

Dr. Gordon looked at her very searchingly.

She sat with her eyes cast down on the floor, as if not caring to meet his glance.

The tables were turned; it was no longer she who was trying to read his thoughts, but he who was attempting to penetrate into her hidden purposes.

CHAPTER V.

The Doctor's Visitor.

Dr. Gethu and the nurse from St. Christopher's arrived shortly after ten the next morning, and Dr. Raynham drove up in his gig about the same time.

Some slight refreshment was provided for the medical men, and Dr. Gordon announced to them that the operation had to be delayed for an hour or so, as Mr. Warwick had some business which he wished to transact first.

The lawyer and his clerk had arrived by the same train which brought the doctor from London, though they had only joined it at Marshborough', the county town, some twenty miles distant from Sommerleigh, which was the nearest station to Mr. Warwick's house.

The nurse, Miss Manton—Miss Duncan as she was known at Mr. Warwick's—had met the lawyer on his arrival, and had immediately conducted him to the sick man's room.

The business did not take very long, and was concluded by eleven, shortly after which hour, the nurse came down and said that she was now ready for the doctors.

Dr. Gordon had prescribed for Mr. Warwick the previous evening, and the medicine appeared to have had a truly marvellous effect.

He was perfectly conscious, and though his cheeks were flushed, apparently with fever, the nurse called the doctor's attention to the fact that Mr. Warwick was perfectly reasonable, and quite fit to make his testamentary depositions.

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Warwick testily, though very feebly, but distinctly. "No one will ever dare to deny that I perfectly well know what I am about. In rewarding your services I have only done what is right. It is not a bit too much, only——"

"Do not disturb yourself," said the nurse, hurriedly interrupting him, "you must be calm, you are really injuring yourself."

Dr. Gordon bent over the patient and said kindly and reassuringly:

"We hope there are many years of life before you yet."

Dr. Gethu approached with his facebag of gas, and soon Mr. Warwick was insensible.

But a momentary glance had first passed between Dr. Gordon and the nurse. The doctor's look was stern, and hers, seeming to comprehend, it was conscience-stricken and subdued.

The operation was wonderfully performed; Dr. Gordon's skill was unerring, and the patient, though utterly exhausted, was restored to consciousness.

"I fear," said Dr. Gordon to Dr. Raynham, "we are too late. This ought to have been done weeks ago. I can scarcely hope Mr. Warwick will have the strength to rally. I must return to town with Dr. Gethu. If you should think my presence again desirable, telegraph and I will come immediately."

The doctors had a short chat in the study till the brougham was ready which was to take the two London men to the station.

Miss Manton did not attempt to see Dr. Gordon alone; on the contrary, she did not leave the sick man's room till the doctors had quitted the house, but as Dr. Gordon was descending the steps to the brougham which was outside, Miss Warwick rushed out to him.

"Have you saved my father?"

"I fear not," he answered, "but I have done my best."

She burst into tears, and he, turning back, approached her and took her hand.

"Let me hear from you," he said deliberately. "I fear there is some dreadful plot against you, which I can and will frustrate."

* * * * *

Dr. Gordon had been back at his duties in London for more than a fortnight, but had received no communication concerning Mr. Warwick, nor had he heard from Miss Manton. He was concluding almost against his own judgment that the operation had been successful, and that the patient's life had been spared.

He was going through his customary morning routine of seeing his patients and prescribing for them, when, in examining the book in which the names of the patients were inscribed before they were shown into the waiting-room, he was startled by seeing that the name of the latest arrival was a Miss Violet Warwick.

She was ushered into the consulting-room at once.

She was attired in deep mourning, and her face, pale and drawn, showed that she had suffered much.

She took the chair he offered her, and, sinking into it, burst into tears.

Dr. Gordon, standing by her side, thought it best that she should give full vent to her emotion, and waited patiently till she should be more composed.

After a few minutes, with tears still in her eyes, she looked up at him with the trustful, earnest expression he remembered so well, and said:

"I remembered your promise, you see, and have come."

"I feared the worst," he answered sadly. "I cannot tell you how truly and how deeply I sympathise with you."

The expression on his face fully bore out his words.

To thank him seemed too commonplace to her; there is a confidence which despises set forms. Her face expressed, however, her gratitude, and she went on:

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"My poor father died a week after the operation. She would not let Dr. Raynham send again for you. She persuaded him that it was not necessary. She thought it better he should not even write to you, and she managed to convince him that my father was getting better; at least, he told me so."

She stopped for a few seconds; but finding Dr. Gordon made no remark, she went on:

"The funeral took place yesterday"—here fresh tears for a minute stopped her utterance—"and afterwards the will was read. Firstly, my father's original will, which left me everything, and which was in the charge of a London solicitor; then a later document drawn up by a lawyer at Marshborough, which bequeaths to me the sum of £1,000 when I reach the age of twenty-one, and the remainder of the estate to the nurse, whose name figures in it as Agatha Manton, not Duncan, as we know her, in consideration, says the will, of her devoted care of my father, and because she was his affianced wife. Moreover, he leaves me to her care, and stipulates that if I marry"—here the girl flushed—"without her consent the money left to me goes to her with the rest of the estate, which is valued at thirty thousand pounds."

The doctor's face wore a severe expression, yet in his eyes there was a strange light, that seemed to mask relief from a heavy burden.

"This will must be disputed," said the doctor resolutely.

"So the London solicitor said at first," the girl answered. "But the nurse was prepared for this objection, and appealed to Dr. Raynham to say whether my father had not clearly expressed his intention before the operation, and asked him if his patient had not then a clear perception of what he was doing. The Marshborough lawyer said he had seen my father a month previously, and he had then been instructed concerning the will. It is true that at that date my father, requiring a solicitor in a hurry in reference to the purchase of a small estate, did send for this man."

"All this is plausible," Dr. Gordon answered, "but for all that the will must be disputed.

"Meantime, you had better stay in London for a few days."

The doctor, without giving a thought to his patients who were waiting for him, touched the bell and gave instructions to the man who answered it, to send his housekeeper to him.

"Now, Mrs. Baxter," he began, when this important personage appeared, "here is a young lady who has come to London under very sad circumstances. She is obliged to stay in town for a few days. What can you suggest as to where she should stop?"

"The blue bedroom is all ready," returned the oracle, "the young lady will find the room very comfortable."

Both the doctor and Violet blushed.

"You see, Mrs. Baxter," explained the doctor, "the young lady is not a relation, and——"

"Hum," ejaculated Mrs. Baxter, whose sympathy had been awakened by Violet's pretty face and deep mourning, but who now, noticing the blushing cheeks of the pair shrewdly, concluded that perhaps she was soon to have a mistress, a thought never overpleasing to a bachelor's housekeeper.

Her significant look troubled both the doctor and Violet, the former almost regretting that he had mixed his housekeeper up in the matter at all.

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"Hum!" she repeated, "my daughter, you know, is married to a baker, the young lady might not object to stay there for a short time. They will do all they can for her, I can answer for that."

Dr. Gordon looked at Violet, who nodded consent.

"Capital, Mrs. Baxter," he said. "Will you take the young lady, Miss Warwick, the daughter of a late patient of mine, round to your daughter's this afternoon; and will you look after her for the present? I want to have a chat with you, Miss Warwick, before you go. Will you do me the pleasure of taking lunch with me, and then we can talk matters over?"

"I am not hungry," Violet answered. "Perhaps—I don't think I will stay. Your time is valuable."

"Oh, you will be hungry at lunch-time," put in Mrs. Baxter. "Of course you will stay and take something. If you will come with me now I will take you up to the drawing-room, where you can look at the illustrated papers till the doctor has finished seeing his patients," and, settling the matter thus, she escorted the girl out of the room.

At lunch both the doctor and Violet were very reserved at first.

Each had, in some degree, realized the actual position, at least as each of them viewed it.

Violet, when the doctor opposed her staying at his house, with a sudden rush of knowledge, felt how true his objection had been. Not till then did she realize how eagerly she had availed herself of his invitation, how pleased she had been that circumstances had happened in such a way that she could appeal to him for protection.

The doctor was delighted with the solution of the difficulty which thus presented itself. Every circumstance favoured him; even Agatha Manton had played into his hand.

She had shown herself as the breaker of the original engagement, and she allowed him to propose to Violet without appearing as a fortune hunter, since she had obtained the girl's rightful inheritance.

"I shall never be able to thank you enough for your confidence in me," he said to Violet. "I feel it is not only a privilege, but a delight to advise you."

Her eyes were cast on the ground, as she replied:

"I should do whatever you say without hesitation."

"Would you?" he explained earnestly, "would you relinquish this inheritance if I thought it was best?"

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"Certainly, if you think I ought to."

"Suppose," he went on, "my counsel were based on sentimental grounds. Suppose I said give it up, because I feared that later on the money might draw to you selfish admirers. Suppose I were to say that, if you had wealth, one who loves you with his whole soul would not dare to tell you of his love, much as he longs to make you his wife, lest his motives might seem selfish, if he could not prove that he loved you for yourself alone. Pray do not think I am abusing hospitality, nor the trust you have in me. Forgive me, if I am inopportune in my declaration in your time of trouble and sorrow, for I must tell you that I love you. I loved you when I first saw you, but then I was bound by a tie—a tie of gratitude to another woman. I can say with truth that I never loved till I saw you. You came to me as a revelation of what true gentle womanhood is. At first I worshipped at your shrine, as some earnest enthusiast might before the image of some holy saint. But now I long to have the right to protect and watch over your life. I long for the right of preserving you from the polluting and cruel influences of the world!"

"What—what?" she answered, "you really love me, you ask me to be your wife? Must I confess that I have just found out I love you, and I feared that my discovery meant unhappiness, for I never thought a man like you would care for me. Now I seem so happy that I fear I am wicked to be able to entertain so much joy when my poor father has only just been buried. Joy should not be possible directly after such sorrow, but my wretchedness seems even to make my possible happiness greater still. I could not think that you—you," and with what pride and admiration she looked at him, "could ever love me."

She was now ashamed of herself, and hid her face in her hands.

He approached her and, bending down, imprinted a kiss on her forehead.

She sprang up.

"You told me," she exclaimed quickly, suddenly recalling what he had said, "that you were engaged! How have you broken it off? What was her name?"

"She broke it off," he returned, "by consenting to marry your father! Her name is Agatha Manton."

Here they were both startled by a violent knocking at the street door.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LOVE THAT KILLS.

THE servant who answered the knock at the street door had orders never to admit anyone while his master was at lunch.

Dr. Gordon was therefore astonished to overhear that a lengthened parleying was going on in the hall.

He concluded, therefore, that the visitor came on a matter of pressing importance, when before he heard the street door close on the caller's departure a knock came at the dining-room door.

The servant entered, and was about to give some message, when he was pushed forcibly on one side, and Miss Manton stood confronting the doctor and Violet.

Dr. Gordon dismissed the servant with a gesture, and advancing hastily, exclaimed:

"This is an unpardonable intrusion—"

"Stay!" interrupted the nurse. "Are you aware that Miss Warwick is my ward, and in following her here, and endeavouring to prevent her from compromising herself, I am only doing my duty."

"Since we are to come to full explanations," he returned sternly, "perhaps I may relieve your anxiety by informing you that Miss Warwick has consented to become my wife, and that on my advice she refuses to recognise that you have any right to control her conduct."

There was a look of desperate hatred in the nurse's face, but Violet met it without flinching, and coming to Dr. Gordon's side, put her hand on his arm. She had feared and dreaded this woman long enough; she felt now, secure in his love, she could defy her.

"Violet," said the doctor, "I want to have a few words in private with Miss Manton—will you go upstairs to the drawing-room, and wait for me there?"

A moment later and the doctor and Miss Manton stood facing each other.

They knew that the interview before them would tax the resources and energy of each; the buttons were off the foils, it was a duel to death.

"So that chit has come between us," commenced the nurse, "and for her doll face you are ready to forget the past and cast aside my love. You will never know how I have loved you, and how I have cherished this, the one weakness of my character. I should have been your slave, I was willing to sell my body and soul for your advancement, and this is my reward."

"Let us discuss the question dispassionately," returned Dr. Gordon. "I should never have failed in my engagement to you, however distasteful this engagement might have become to me, had not circumstances of your own framing made our union impossible. Do you understand me?" with a sneer.

"No," she answered. "I am not good at guessing riddles."

"Firstly, then," rejoined Duncan Gordon, "I discovered that by concealing symptoms of Mr. Warwick's disease you had deceived Dr. Raynham as to the gravity of his patient's illness. This was not by inadvertence, I knew you had some interested motive; it is useless now to deny it. Before I knew who the nurse was, I was convinced of this, and I was determined to expose her. You will never know how my heart was wrung when I found out that you were the nurse and that you wished me gone, because you feared I might save the sick man's life. Surely this was enough to sever the bonds which had drawn us together. I could not shut my eyes to your intentions, and I determined to do my best to save you, in spite of yourself, and I trusted I had done so when you consented to my staying. I owed you everything. I could not guess what temptation had come across your path—we are all weak at times. I rejoiced at the thought that I might have helped you to conquer an evil instinct. I had arrived in time to save you from an actual crime, and my gratitude was so great that I determined not to let the certainty I had acquired, dreadful as it was, separate us."

He paused for a few seconds; her eyes were fixed on him; she tried to still her breathing so that each of his words might be more distinct.

"Go on," was her only uttered comment. He continued:

"The next morning I was sure the solicitor's visit was only another move in your scheme. When I bent over the sick man, do you know what I discovered?"

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He paused; but she did not answer, and her large dark eyes wandered restlessly, as if trying to avoid his glance.

"I found," he went on, his words articulated with forced distinctiveness, "that the patient had been drugged with some powerful stimulant so as to deceive those who might see him as to his true condition. I concealed even this out of gratitude for the past."

"Gratitude, always gratitude," she murmured.

"Was not this enough to part us for ever?" he asked.

"Go on," was her only answer.

"To-day," continued Duncan Gordon, "I have heard all about the will. I have no doubt in my own mind that it is a fraudulent will, yet I almost rejoice at its existence, since it enables me to take Miss Warwick as my wife. Keep the money for which you have schemed, and, further more, let me acquit my debt to you—it was three hundred pounds. I will send you one thousand. In accepting the legacy from the late Mr. Warwick, you recognise you were engaged to become his wife, and, in contracting that engagement you necessarily released me from mine to you."

"Have you finished?" she asked with flashing eyes, "have you trampled enough on me? Have you glorified sufficiently in your righteousness and in my vice? Do you fancy that I longed for that man's wealth for myself? I, who had but one object in life, was it for myself that, having matured my schemes, I longed for his death? I who had but one date in my life, and that date not quite a year distant!"

Dr. Gordon gave a violent start. Could the suspicion, which flashed with lightning-like suddenness through his brain, be possible?

"Ah!" she continued bitterly, "is it only now you guess the secret of my scheming? Mine may have been misguided love, but it was love with no alloy of selfishness, unless it be selfishness to plot and scheme for the advancement of another. As our engagement was formed on a first offering, which had enabled you to give your talents full scope, I longed to bring you as a marriage portion sufficient to make you a rich man. I feared all along you did not really love me. I was determined to buy your love at the price even of my own soul."

"This is dreadful!" exclaimed Gordon. "You make me feel that I am in some degree your accomplice. You force on me the conviction that I am guilty in not having found you out before, and in not having protected you more fully against yourself."

"You nearly accomplished this," she returned in a soft voice. "When I spoke to you that evening at Mr. Warwick's I felt a sudden desire to come to you with no barrier of guilt between us. I am making a confession, so I need make no concealment. I may, therefore, explain that when Mr. Warwick sent for the Marshborough solicitor on some pressing business, he instructed him to draw up a deed leaving me £500.

"I discovered that this solicitor was a needy and extravagant man, and that his clerk had been a convict, whom he had taken because the man was willing to work for small wages.

"I saw this solicitor, and, by offering him a big bribe, induced him to draw up the will you have heard of, and undertook, when I sent for him for Mr. Warwick to sign, he should not be able to comprehend what he put his hand to, and should only think it was the deed leaving me £500.

"The lawyer and his clerk would witness the deed, and I knew I could make Dr. Raynham agree with anything I might say.

"Your arrival disconcerted my plans; the sight of you softened my heart. I resolved I would have the deed for £500 drawn up, and that I would give it to the lawyer to conceal the original arrangement, and that I would come to you without that blot on my conscience.

"I should have done so had I not seen you with Violet Warwick in the garden.

"My heart was then hardened—doubly hardened—for now I wished to hold her in my power."

"The explanation is sufficient," said Dr. Gordon with a shudder. "Miss Warwick shall not dispute the will. I will listen to you no longer. Go your way, I leave you to your conscience."

"And leave you to marry her!" exclaimed Miss Manton, with flashing eyes, "never, never! You shall not spurn me for her. My broken, crime-stained life lies at your door. I do not care for death; your love was my life, and without it existence is a burden. You shall never marry her!"

"See," she shouted, "I came prepared for vengeance," and she brandished in the air a revolver she drew from her bosom. "Yes, and I will have it!"

The doctor sprang towards her, but she rushed from the door and hurried up the stairs. He rapidly followed her, trusting to avert a catastrophe.

But unfortunately, Violet, hearing the race on the stairs, came to the drawing-room door and stood on the landing, and Agatha Manton, still wildly muttering to herself, aimed the weapon at the girl and fired.

Luckily the doctor had just seized her dress, which caused her to swerve, thus disturbing her aim, and the shot passed over Violet's shoulder, though she naturally shrank back with a scream.

Duncan Gordon, thinking only of Violet, and fearing she was hurt rushed towards her.

The servants were ascending the stairs, but they shrank back alarmed as the nurse turned towards them pistol in hand, and cried in a sad plaintive voice:

"All, all for love of him!"

And then suddenly turning the pistol against herself she pulled the trigger and fell back dead.

* * * * *

Twelve months passed before Duncan Gordon led Violet to the altar and made her his wife.

For several months the girl's health was in a precarious state. She was so shaken by the dreadful event that has been related that it was feared she would never recover her reason.

But youth and a naturally good constitution were at last victorious, and with health and memory came back to her mind her love for Duncan Gordon, and as soon as she was well enough, they were quietly married, and started on a long honeymoon to the beautiful South.

Later on Violet persuaded her husband to alter his mind with regard to her inheritance, and this he consented to do on condition that the money should be strictly settled on her.

THE END.

ON

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HIS DECISION.

By W. R. WILEY.

THE sun had vanished on the horizon several hours earlier, and the natural light of day had given way to such artificial light of night as Broomton could afford. This artificial light did not amount to much.

A stray lamp-post stood here and there along the main street, surmounted by a globe in which a feeble gas light flickered. As yet Broomton knew nothing of the wonders of electricity.

The shops along the thoroughfare were dark. The proprietors closed their shops early in Broomton.

The windows of many of the residences that lined the street likewise gave forth no light.

Away in the distance, at the lower end of the town, was the illuminated face of a large town clock. Lamps with brilliant reflectors produced the illumination. The small hand of this clock was at ten and the large hand at twelve.

In the general solid blackness, the light in the Blankshire Bank was especially noticeable. The light itself was not particularly bright, but the bank windows were large, and the space in front of them was not inky black. The bank itself was the only institution of its kind in Broomton. It offered its facilities not only to Broomton, but also to Blankshire county, and the annual reports showed that it was in a flourishing condition.

Within the bank was but a single figure. He had been busy with the books before him for hours and only when the office clock struck ten did he close his ledgers. He did not rise from his desk and prepare to leave the building, however. He sat there minute after minute a pained expression on his countenance. The face was not a bad one. There were lines of weakness and, in addition, lines that gave indication of a dissipated life. But, on the other hand there was an expression that led one to believe that the man was kind-hearted. John Thurston was a man of complex character. Even then his conscience was at war with the lower element of his nature.

Five weeks before his fellow clerk, the second bookkeeper in the bank, had been forced to bed. Thurston had volunteered to do the sick man's work, along with his own, to save expense. He had toiled daily at his double task without a murmur. Three days before his companion had died. That day Thurston had helped to lower him into the grave. Now he was engaged in adjusting the former bookkeeper's ledger so that all would be in readiness for the new man who was to take his friend's place. The burden of work Thurston had borne. He had uncomplainingly laboured so that his dead friend would not have ... to employ a substitute. There was a rule in the bank that men absent from duty had to pay such a substitute. Thurston had sacrificed his time to save his friend that expense. He was now contemplating whether or not he should ask his dead friend to return the favour. The man was dead, but nevertheless, he could aid him.

Thurston had led a wild life. He was a married man, and he loved his wife and children; but inherent weakness had forced him from his friends to the saloon and gaming table. At the latter he had lost. To cover his losses he had taken bank funds. The sums had been covered by expert bookkeeping. No one had suspected the theft. Why should they suspect, he reasoned. Why should they ever know the truth when the ledger of the dead bookkeeper was before him? A few strokes of his expert pen and the next examiner would declare that the dead man had died an embezzler.

Thurston sat there buried in thought. He had sacrificed his time to help his friend. Now that the latter was dead, why should not the debt of gratitude be paid? The second bookkeeper had left the land of toil; had gone either into a dreamless sleep or into a realm of eternal happiness. He could not have gone into a land of suffering; he had been too good, too pure on earth, Thurston reasoned. How, then, could the dead man be affected by any action on Thurston's part? True, his memory would not be revered; but the young man had possessed few friends and no relatives. He had been singularly alone in the world. His memory would not be revered, anyway, Thurston reasoned.

The bookkeeper's head ached under the tension, and he rose. The expression on his countenance was of abject suffering.

On the desk lay the ledgers; a few strokes of the pen would do the work. The morrow would be too late; the new clerk would then take charge of the second ledger. It would then be only a matter of a short time before the shortage was discovered. The work must be done then, or never.

Thurston paced up and down the narrow space between the railing and the wall. Surely the dead man would not mind, he said to himself. They had loved each other too much on earth. But, oh! how his conscience stung him!

Thurston, on the spur of the moment, seized the ledgers, carried them to the vault and placed them on the shelves; he then laid a hand on the knob of the iron door—and halted. If he swung the door shut and turned the combination knob, it would be too late. He could lock but not unlock. He stood there, trying to reach a decision.

He pictured in his mind his little home, not far distant from the bank, and the loving wife and children there. How they had borne with him during his dissipated life, never failing to care for or love him. Could he reward their faithfulness by wrecking their future life? Beads of hot perspiration rolled from his brow.

Then another picture rose before him. A man stood before him; the face was that of his dead friend. How the latter had pleaded with him, tried to save him from moral wreck, Heaven and he alone knew! He recalled their conversations; how the other had talked of his lonely life and said how it was his one desire to live a pure life and leave, when he died, a name untainted and spotless. He thought of the other's pleadings, tears and wish. For a moment Thurston hesitated.

Then the ponderous door shut and a rattling indicated that the combination knob was being turned.

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THE little Spanish town of Barasoam was in that state of commotion which one would expect to find after a desultory engagement between two small forces. In the early morning there had been an encounter—it was more than a skirmish, yet not important enough to be called a battle—between a body of Royalist troops and a band of Carlists, which had resulted in the rout of the latter.

The result of the fighting, which was not of long duration, was not pleasing to the majority of the inhabitants and non-combatants in Barasoam. They numbered a good many friends and relatives among the Carlists, the leader of whom was young Pavlo Dorada, a native of the town, who had thrown in his lot with the followers of Don Carlos some six months previously.

Dorada, although following the humble occupation of shoemaker, was a man of more ambitious ideas than his fellows; he had educated himself much above his position, a thing not very common among Spaniards a quarter of a century ago, and he chafed at the backward condition of his country, longing for a better form of government and determined to seize the first opportunity of assisting in the work of raising Spain once again to her former proud position. He believed that the Carlists' rising was the opportunity he sought, and he threw himself into the struggle with all his ardour of youth and ambition.

There were two persons in the little town who were more interested in Pavlo Dorada than the rest of the inhabitants; these persons were Marita Gomez and Juana Mestre. The former was an orphan, as was Dorada himself, and the latter was the daughter of Manuel Mestre, the Alcande, a staunch supporter of the Royalist cause and a man of some importance. Both Marita and Juana were little more than twenty-two years of age.

The rout of the Carlists had been complete; a large proportion of the little band had been taken prisoners, many had been killed and the others had succeeded in effecting their escape by flight. Dorada was not among the killed or the prisoners; the supposition was that he was one of the fugitives and had got clear of the neighbourhood, but the Royalists held the opinion that he had not been able to elude them and that he was in hiding either in the town or just outside it.

It was a dull winter afternoon and night had fallen quickly. Patrols of Royalist troops were searching for the young leader of the Carlists, who had gained the reputation of possessing considerable influence over the rank and file of the "insurgents," and whose capture was consequently very desirable. But if the leaders of the Royalist troops were anxious to prevent the escape of Dorada, the men—tired and hungry—were not so eager for the work and did not trouble to keep fully on the alert.

Hence it came about that the slight figure of a young woman was allowed to pass a post at the further end of the town without being challenged. Once clear of the watchers, the girl hurried forward at a rapid pace until she reached a tumble-down cottage almost hidden in a dip of the ground.

In response to her tap on the door, she was bidden to enter. She opened the door cautiously and went inside, closing the door carefully behind her and locking it. As she turned with a half-uttered inquiry, she was clasped in two strong arms by a young man who kissed her and addressed her in endearing terms.

"Oh, Pavlo, it is so imprudent of you to be here, in this room, within sight of anyone who may force an entrance," she cried, when the first embrace was over. "Why do you not keep in safety underground?"

"Like a rat!" he exclaimed bitterly. Then, assuming a lighter tone, he continued: "Yes, I know it is safer, but you must not think that I have lost all sense of prudence. I knew that you would try to see me before I stole away in the darkness across country to rejoin my friends. I have left my hiding-place every few minutes since it grew dark in order to listen for your coming."

"Old Anna brought me word that you were here," replied Marita, in answer to a former question. "She is a faithful soul and loves you as though you were her son; if it were known that she had helped you, it would go hard with her."

"Bless her!" said Pavlo gratefully.

Then the lovers fell to talking quietly of future prospects. They dared not have a light, and the little window was guarded by a shutter, so that they sat in perfect darkness.

"It will be impossible for me to remain in dear old Spain," said Pavlo sadly. "A lie has been spread abroad concerning me by some enemy; it is said that I am in

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league with the Royalists and have given them such information as has enabled them to upset the Carlist plans and inflict two or three severe defeats upon us—that I am merely keeping with them in order to be better able to assist those who are trying to crush them. Only last night I received a message from headquarters to answer 'a grave charge'—so the note ran—and the messenger, who is a friend of mine, told me more about him. From him I gathered that if I reported myself I should surely be shot as a traitor."

"Oh, Pavlo," cried the girl indignantly.

"I have no doubt that it is true, what this friend tells me," returned Pavlo: "so I appear to be doomed, anyhow, unless I can get clear of the country. If the Royalists get me, I can expect no mercy at their hands; and if I am taken to the Carlist headquarters, death awaits me with equal certainty. You know that I have been lenient to defeated foes; this has not pleased some of the chiefs, and, in addition, false evidence has been given against me in other respects. The note which was delivered to me last night commanded me to retire at once from the leadership of my contingent, and hand it over to my lieutenant; but I declined to do so, for I knew that quite half the men would refuse to serve under him. We were outnumbered and beaten; that again is against me.'

"But what will you do?" asked Marita anxiously.

"Make my way across country to the French Frontier as well as I can. I detest the idea of sneaking away, but if I cannot be of use now, it is well that I should try to preserve my life in the hope that it may be useful to my country at some future date."

They conversed in subdued tones for some minutes, Pavlo entering into an account of the manner in which he hoped to escape the vigilance of his enemies and reach French territory, Marita counselling him as best she could and giving some valuable information concerning the whereabouts of the Royalists. She had brought a small sum of money with her, and this she handed to Pavlo to serve him on the way.

"I do not like to take it from you," he protested. "It is the result of your hard work."

"You must take it, Pavlo," she cried energetically. "You will want money and——"

Crash! Crash!

The lovers clasped each other in dismay as the door flew open under the force of a heavy blow, and, at the same time, the back wooden wall of the cottage was broken in by the same process. Pavlo had no time to make any defence before he was surrounded by men wearing the Royalist uniform, who rushed in through the open door and through the breach at the back of the cottage.

He was surrounded, Marita was dragged from him, and he was bound hand and foot despite his struggles. Marita, half-mad with fear and anxiety concerning her lover's fate, struggled desperately to liberate herself from the man who held her, and he had to appeal to one of his comrades for assistance to restrain her.

Some of the soldiers carried torches, and these lighted up the interior with a weird illumination. Marita saw that the case was hopeless; there was no possible escape for her lover; so, with a wail of despair, she gave up the struggle and remained quiet except for her sobs.

Then there entered through the door a second female figure, slightly taller than Marita and less graceful, less simple in appearance than Pavlo's sweetheart. She stepped to the centre of the room and stood with clenched hands and gleaming eyes, in a position where she could see and be seen by both the lovers.

"Lovemaking is dangerous in such times as these—it may lead to discovery!" she said in a mocking tone.

"Juana!" gasped Marita. "She has betrayed you!"

"Fiend!" exclaimed Pavlo, his anger getting the better of him for a moment. "It is you who have betrayed me!"

"You had in your power a few months ago to make me an angel; you rejected my love—why complain because, by so doing, you turned me into the opposite?" Juana laughed shrilly; there was a trace of hysteria in her voice. "It was your turn then, and you refused to listen to me; I could have given you money and a better position, but you would not listen to me. Now it is my turn, and how ever much you plead, you will not succeed in gaining a hearing!"

And again she laughed, this time with a laugh of triumph.

He stood before a long table, facing the five men who were to pronounce his doom.

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"I shall plead for nothing!" replied Pavlo, quiet again. Turning to his captors, he said: "Take me away. I won't hear another word, if I can help it. Good-bye, Marita; think of me!"

To tell the truth, the soldiers were disgusted, rough and passionate as they themselves were, at Juana's conduct, and they took their prisoner into the open without waiting for the officer's command.

The soldiers released Marita with a warning not to attempt to follow, and the two girls were left together in the little room, lighted by a small candle which one of the men had found on a shelf.

"Oh, why have you done this wicked thing?" moaned Marita, clasping her hands in agony. "You have destroyed him!"

"You now know, both of you, that a woman's hate can be as strong as her love," sneered Juana. "He rejected my affection and bestowed his upon you—you, a woman of weakness, without the strength of passion, which, whether for love or hate, makes a real woman. How can a woman make a man happy, help him in his efforts, when her blood runs as coldly as yours? Yet he scorned my love and turned to you!"

"He never scorned you!" said Marita, quietly. "He loves me, so he had no love to give you. He did not seek your affection, and he is not to be blamed for—for what happened."

There was logic in this, but the offended pride of Juana Mestre would not allow her to recognise it. She burst into a torrent of harsh words and threats against Pavlo and the girl who stood before her, and only ceased when her breath failed her. Then she stood panting and with clenched hands, looking like a veritable fury.

Marita did not reply; she understood the passionate nature of the women in that part of Spain, and how quickly one feeling can give place to another; she herself was not entirely free from this failing, and her woman's wit was working swiftly on an idea which had flashed across her mind. Juana was the daughter of one of the men who would probably act as judges in the trial of Pavlo—he would have some sort of a trial, no doubt. She was handsome, and her influence over the opposite sex was not inconsiderable; if her changeful nature could be brought to make another turn, she might effect the salvation of the man whom she had just betrayed into the hands of his enemies. "If I appeal to her love for Pavlo, I may reach her heart and induce her to help him," so ran Marita's thoughts.

"You have done your worst," she said addressing Juana; "his life is at stake, and that is your work. Just now you reproached me for not being a woman, as you understood the term, but it is you who are not a true woman. When one of our sex loves truly, that love endures for ever; it cannot change, even man's coldness and cruelty are powerless to affect it. Pavlo has not wronged you in anyway—you know it in your heart, you cannot deny it, but you have allowed your vanity to get the better of your love. I love him, and if he were to throw me off at this moment, I would still remain faithful to him and would be ready to lay down my life to save him. Which of us is the true woman? I tell you, your affection for him is hollow—it is a sham, a mockery! If it were not so, you would not have followed me in order to discover his hiding-place and betray him. You would be moving Heaven and earth to save him. You do not, you never did, love him!"

It would be difficult to describe the varying emotions which filled the breast of Juana as she listened to this tirade; her breath came harder, she clenched her hands until the nails cut into the flesh, her whole body swayed as if moved by a strong wind when Marita had finished.

"It's a lie!" she screamed. "I love him," repeated Juana. "I will prove it. I will save him!"

And before Marita could say another word, Juana had rushed from the cottage into the darkness.

The Royalists intended to make short work of Pavlo Dorada, whom they recognised as exerting a powerful influence on the Carlists in that district. He was taken at once to the small municipal building in order to be interrogated rather than tried.

He stood before a long table, facing the five men who were to pronounce his doom; three of them were army officers, the fourth was Manuel Mestre, and the fifth occupied a Government post in Madrid.

"We need waste no time in useless formalities," said Colonel Rodriguez, who had assumed the position of chief judge by virtue of his military rank. "You know your fate, Dorada. There is, however, one chance of escape from death. You possess, without doubt, much information that will be valuable to us; give us that information and you shall go free."

The others assented to this proposition by murmurs of approval, but the prisoner smiled disdainfully. He made no attempt to reply, and his judges rightly interpreted his silence as a refusal.

"Why should you hesitate to tell us what you know?" urged Rodriguez. "Your own friends are against you and mean to shoot you; we have learnt so much through our friend here"—pointing to the official from Madrid—"and this is confirmed by the note found on you. Seeing that they have thus turned upon you in spite of your services to the Carlist cause, you should have no reluctance to save your life by throwing over those who have turned upon you."

But Pavlo was unmoved by this specious reasoning.

"Never! If my friends act dishonourably, that does not excuse a dishonourable action on my part."

"But you have everything to gain, nothing to lose!" urged Rodriguez again.

"Father, he must be saved, you must not allow him to be shot!" cried the voice of Juana at this juncture. She pushed her way through the guards, and stood by the side of the prisoner. "He has fought fairly—and—I love him!"

This interruption, rendered more strange by the excited appearance of Mestre's daughter, caused much commotion among the five men. Mestre arose with an angry exclamation.

"My daughter"—his voice softened as he spoke, for he idolized his only child—"what you ask is impossible. You are not serious."

"There is only one chance for the prisoner," interposed Rodriguez coldly. "He knows what that is."

"You will do it?" asked Juana, who had heard the condition, turning appealingly to Pavlo. "You will ——"

"I would never do anything so dishonourable, not even to save my life!" returned Pavlo firmly.

"You are mad!" cried Juana. "But you shall no

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kill him, I will not let you! You will have to kill me first!" she exclaimed, turning to Rodriguez, who only smiled contemptuously at her vehement declaration.

"My child, you must retire," said Mestre, in response to a few harsh words from the Colonel.

But Juana refused to leave, and when three soldiers approached to take her away at the command of Rodriguez, she threw her arms about Dorada and clung to him.

In spite of her cries and protestations, she was taken

The soldiers had fired in return and had stormed the thicket.

from the chamber and conducted to her home, whither her father immediately followed, leaving his colleagues to decide the fate of the prisoner.

Mestre was much relieved to find that Juana's excitement had subsided and that she had grown quite calm; this sudden change did not cause him surprise, for he quite understood his daughter's erratic temperament. So calm had she become that she was not even moved by the news, which reached them a little later, that Dorada was to be shot at sunrise.

During the evening, although the night was cold, she went for a walk; she was absent for nearly two hours, but she gave no explanation when she returned and Mestre deemed it advisable not to ask for one.

He would have been much less easy in his mind had he known that Juana had had a long talk with Marita and afterwards with a soldier whom she had bribed to procure two or three rifles and some ammunition.

Dorada, firm and erect, but looking somewhat pale and haggard, was led from his improvised cell to the spot just outside the town where he was to meet his fate. Half-a-dozen of his comrades had been sent to their last account on the same spot during the preceding afternoon.

Although it was generally known among the people where the execution would take place, none ventured near the ground, for a warning proclamation had been issued by the Royalists, and everyone was afraid of being arrested on suspicion of being a Carlist if found near this little strip of ground when Dorada should be placed with his face to the hedge and his back to the firing party.

There was no ceremony. Dorada's hands were bound close to his sides, and his eyes were left unbound as he was not to face the soldiers.

No priest was in attendance to comfort him in his last moments, and his resting-place was to be the ditch into which he might look if he chose, with some dead branches or a few spadefuls of earth to cover him.

The doomed man turned his eyes upwards and breathed a prayer to Heaven on his behalf and for the future welfare of Marita. It would soon be over, he thought; and then he forgot himself and reflected, like a true patriot, on the future of his country. "Poor Spain!"

He heard, as if at a great distance, the commands of the sergeant in charge of the firing party. Then—and, even in his semi-conscious state, he fancied that they came too quickly and irregularly—he heard two reports. He felt no shock, and he waited for the others, but there seemed to be some commotion. Some more shots. Still he was unhurt.

"Quick!" said a voice, which he recognised as familiar, yet could not remember to whom it belonged. "Jump the ditch and I will help you. Quick, Pavlo, for Heaven's sake!"

He leapt across the ditch and, his hands being bound, he fell against the thorns, cutting his face. A small hand grasped him by the arm, and the next moment he felt that his hands were free. He half-pushed himself through the hedge, some of which had been cut away, and was half-dragged through it; on the other side he found himself face to face with Marita.

The girl hurried him away and vouchafed no word of explanation till they were within the wood half-a-mile away.

Then she told him what had happened, without, however, stopping in their flight.

Juana had evolved a desperate scheme for saving

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Pavlo. She knew where the execution would take place, and had arranged to take up her position in a thicket to the left, from which she could command a view of the firing party, and from this point she would discharge two or three rifles at the opportune moment.

The object of this manœvure was to make the soldiers believe that they were being attacked by a rescue party; they would, so Juana hoped, immediately turn their attention from Dorada to these assailants and discharge their rifles at the thicket, probably making a rush at it afterwards.

While Juana was doing this, Marita was to cut Pavlo's bonds and hurry him away. The original plan was that Marita should hide in the ditch or somewhere near her lover, but this proved to be an impossibility, and she had to keep on the farther side.

The plan had worked admirably. The desultory fire from the thicket had had the desired effect; the soldiers had fired in return and, forgetting their prisoner for the time, had stormed the thicket.

That was all Marita could tell him; she could only shake her head in reply to Pavlo's questions concerning the safety of Juana.

"She told me that when she had done her part—I was to do mine without thinking of her — she would hold me responsible for your safety and that the vengeance of Heaven would fall upon me if I failed to carry out her instructions."

Pavlo was loath to continue his flight with the uncertainty of Juana's fate tormenting him, but Marita pointed out that it would be utterly impossible for him to do anything, and that he would be nullifying the sacrifice if he were to go back and fall into the hands of his enemies.

So they went on, hiding by day and travelling by night until they reached French territory and were safe.

It was a long time before they learnt what they desired to know, but at length a badly-written letter from Anna, to whom they had succeeded in conveying their address, together with the announcement of their marriage, gave them the details.

When the men of the firing party reached the thicket, which they pluckily "rushed," apparently at the risk of being riddled with bullets, they found a woman lying on the ground and bleeding from a wound in the chest. By her side lay a rifle, while two other rifles were fixed in the thicket with their muzzles pointed in the direction where the men had stood.

The sergeant, kneeling beside the dying woman, recognised Juana, whom he had seen in the council chamber.

"Is he gone? Has he escaped?" she gasped, with an appealing glance. "Oh, let him escape; I love him!"

The faces of the soldiers lost their hard expression. Juana noticed the softened look, and a faint smile played over her lips.

"He will be free! I have saved him!"

And those were her last words.

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DOUBT

DETECTIVE V. BARRISTER

I.

A Tricky Lawyer's Tricky Game.

"John Connelly!"

Before the echo of the clerk's voice was lost in the silence of the court-room, the prisoner stepped briskly forward. He was young, flashily-dressed and his face was not a pleasant one. It would have delighted a student of Lombroso, with its prominent cheek-bones, and small rat's eyes twinkling in sunken sockets, and the narrow forehead.

There is always something pathetic in the spectacle of the human animal brought to bay, but one would have to be weakly sentimental to stir up any sympathy for this creature.

The man was up for burglary. The judge upon this bench had the reputation of giving long sentences for this crime, and as the present case was an especially bad one, the man would get, more than likely, fifteen years. That would practically consume the best years of his life. He would be an old man when he came out.

A plea of not guilty was entered and the Q.C. for the prosecution arose to address the court.

"The man who stands at the bar," he said, "has had a bad career for ten years, though he has never suffered a longer term of imprisonment than a few months, for each of the many offences of which he has been convicted.

"His last crime is the worst of which he has been guilty, and he deserves the fullest sentence the law will allow, for he is a murderer at heart, and his victim escaped only by a miracle.

"Judge for yourselves, gentlemen," addressing the jury directly, "the gravity of his crime.

"On the night of August 17th of last year he burglariously entered the house of a worthy and highly-respected citizen of Fulham, the Hon. George Catling.

"Mr Catling had drawn a large sum of money from the bank on the previous day, and the prisoner had doubtlessly obtained the information in some way. This money was chiefly in banknotes. The man obtained entrance to the house by a window in the second storey over the porch. He is what is known as an expert 'second-storey' thief.

"Gaining access to Mr. Catling's room, he noiselessly ransacked the private desk without disturbing the sleeping occupant. He came at last upon an iron strong-box in which he rightly thought the money was placed.

"He picked the lock, had secured the contents, and was about to make his exit from the room, when Mr. Catling, awaking suddenly, though he does not remember from what cause, realizing that someone was in the room, leapt instantly to the floor.

"The burglar extinguished his lantern and made a dash for the door, but Mr. Catling's first act had been to switch on the electric light, and before the villain had reached the door he had grappled with him.

"A short but terrible struggle followed. The burglar knew that the noise would soon cause help to arrive on the scene and, determined to gain his freedom even at the price of murder, he struck at his victim with a jemmy he carried.

"It was the merest chance that the blow was not instantly fatal. As it was it rendered Mr. Catling unconscious, and the murderous fiend escaped with his ill-gotten gain.

"The household was aroused, and it was the prompt attention Mr. Catling received that went far to saving his life. Mr. Catling has quite recovered and will appear as a witness. He has already identified the prisoner at the bar.

"I shall also have as a witness one of the servants, Maggie Todd, who was the first to arrive upon the scene of the struggle and saw the burglar disappear out of the house.

"This woman I shall also put into the box, and shall prove to you that she had been engaged to the prisoner, but broke with him because of his bad character. This witness gave the man's name to the police, which aided them in capturing the man, whom upon arrest she immediately identified."

"I object!" exclaimed the counsel for the defence.

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"Have you any proof of it?"

"We have the girl herself," replied the counsel for the prosecution.

"Then let her testify to that effect. But I object to that assertion before she has done so."

The counsel for the prosecution instantly detected some new and unexpected development on the part of the defence. What it was he learnt later to his temporary chagrin.

"I waive the point," he replied.

About midnight I was awakened by a bright light shining in my face.

He looked about the court room for Maggie Todd. He knew she had been in the custody of an officer, but now he could not see her.

"The prisoner," he concluded "denied the crime. The money, four thousand two hundred and seventy-five pounds, has never been traced. These are the facts of the case, and your duty you know. Such crimes are the most dangerous that beset society, and must be severely dealt with."

The counsel for the prosecution sat down, and the jury fixed their attention upon the prisoner in a way that boded no good for him.

But he was putting up a good bluff. He wore a pleasant expression, at any rate as pleasant as his face would permit. He had been out on bail until two weeks before the time for his trial, when he had been surrendered.

The first witness was Mr. Charles Baker, a nephew of Mr. Catling. He lived with the latter, and he testified as to the money having been in the house, and of his having seen his uncle put it away in the strong-box on the night of the burglary. He had not seen the burglar, but was next to arrive on the scene after Maggie Todd, and further testified to having examined the box in which the money had been placed, and that it was gone. This was all his evidence was intended to show.

Then Lewis Levingham for the defence leapt to his feet.

"Do you of your own knowledge know anything that connects the prisoner with this crime?"

"I do not," was the reply.

Levingham sat down with a smile of triumph, and Robert Abney, counsel for the prosecution, deigned a withering and contemptuous glance at his unworthy opponent. How they did hate each other! Levingham was a scoundrel, and there was no question about it; but his brother barristers had no means of convicting him of anything that would enable them to have him disqualified, though they watched him closely always. Nineteen out of every twenty benchers openly loathed the man, some had gone so far as to have him shadowed in the hope of getting incriminating evidence against him. But he was as sharp as the criminals whom he invariably defended.

Maggie was called next, and there was a little stir when it was found that she was not present. Abney felt a momentary alarm. Had she been spirited away in the interests of the defence?

His fears were allayed, however, almost immediately, by the girl's appearance. She was at once called to the witness box.

"Miss Todd, I want you to tell what you know of the burglary at the house of Mr. Catling," said the prosecuting counsel.

Levingham was on his feet again in an instant.

"May I ask your lordship to rule that the witness need not reply unless she wishes to," he said.

"Why not?" exclaimed Abney.

"Because she is the prisoner's wife," was the mocking reply.

"Is this true?" asked Abney addressing the witness.

"Yes, sir. I married him three weeks ago yesterday."

The proofs of this were presented and found correct.

They had been married while the prisoner was out on bail.

The court officers looked at each other in an amazed way.

"That's another of Levingham's sharp tricks," they said.

There was no compelling her to testify against her husband and she was at once ordered to step down.

The prosecution was temporarily embarrassed, but soon rallied and called Mr. Catling.

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That gentleman had not altogether recovered from the effects of that night, or else he was suffering from a relapse. He was pale and looked ill, and he carried an ugly scar across his forehead, where he had been struck the night of the burglary.

Mr. Catling's story was slow and uncertain at all times, but he described the events of that night substantially as Abney had set them forth at the beginning.

The prisoner looked somewhat nervous at his recital, but Levingham rubbed his hands, took snuff copiously, and appeared generally delightfully at ease.

"Now, Mr. Catling," said Abney, "answer this: Have you seen the burglar since his assault upon you?"

"I have," was the faint reply.

"Look upon the prisoner and tell me whether he is the man."

Mr. Catling became pale, put his hand to his head, as if in pain, and trembling visibly seemed scarcely able to proceed.

"I—I don't know," he said. "I—I——" he groaned, and an attendant went to his assistance.

Abney was in a rage, but he concealed it admirably.

If Mr. Catling could not identify the prisoner the prosecution would fail, and the man would be acquitted. It would seriously affect his reputation.

What could have caused this change in Mr. Catling?

He had been absolutely positive of his identification after the man's arrest.

He temporized and gained some time, and tried to draw from the gentleman something that would explain this remarkable change, but without result. After another attempt to get him to charge the prisoner as his assailant and the burglar, and identify him, he faltered, "I don't know," and this settled the case.

The prisoner was acquitted, and walked out of the court with his counsel, holding his head unnecessarily jauntily.

Abney was terribly enraged at the way things had gone. He knew that the two men who went out together were as black-hearted a pair of rogues as ever lived—and he couldn't prove it!

II.

Getting the Scent.

I had witnessed the whole proceeding, and when I got an opportunity I suggested to Mr. Abney that he should try and run them down.

"But how?" he exclaimed.

"Bart Hocking," I remarked laconically.

"Hocking? Hocking?" replied Abney dubiously.

"The cleverest detective in the kingdom," I answered.

"Oh, ah, he who got at the bottom of that Regent Street jewel robbery. A clever young chap. I—believe—I—will!"

"It would be well to see him at once," I suggested.

"Yes. Do you know where to find him? Telephone or wire to him to come at once, if possible."

Bart happened to be at home, and I was put into communication with him. I told him a few facts of the case, and he consented to take it up at once. The name Levingham had settled it.

He had a score to settle with him. Although he lived in Streatham, Bart agreed to see Abney in forty-five minutes. He arrived two minutes before the time set. It was a rule with Bart to be always before time. On this trifle rested many a success.

Abney, meantime, had taken Mr. Catling to his offices, and detained him until the arrival of Bart.

If anybody knew how to handle a nervous man, and one in the present state of Mr Catling, that being was Bart Hocking.

The man approached Bart and whispered: "All clear."

The first thing he did was to talk about the new production Mr. Tree was staging. Then he suggested a stroll, and he took Abney and Catling out for a walk, led them down to the Embankment, talked about the gulls to be seen on the Thames, and admired the peculiar atmospheric effect which lighted up the river façade of Somerset House. They turned into Horse Guards Avenue, and so into Whitehall, and then to the Ship Tavern where he led them to a table and they were soon enjoying a dinner.

Towards the end of it Mr. Catling was quite himself, and he was ready to be led to anything Bart wished him to do.

Meanwhile, Abney had been making a study of the

ENTRANCING

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young detective, and had been charmed and edified at the wonderful magnetism he displayed, and his amazing knowledge of everything under the sun.

"Levingham, eh?" said Bart, with a chuckle and a smile when they had come to talk about the case. "Bad as they make 'em. I am glad to have a case in which he figures. But come now," this direct to Mr. Catling, "was the prisoner Connelly the same as the burglar who assaulted you?"

"He was," replied Mr. Catling.

Abney looked amazed and perhaps a little angry.

"I know my conduct to-day has been unmanly, Mr. Abney," explained Mr. Catling, "but I hope you will make allowances. I seemed to be under a spell of some kind, and I broke down through sheer cowardice—fear!"

"Fear!" cried Abney. "Not of the prisoner?"

"No. But of the man who gave me this." He pointed to the scar upon his head.

Abney was speechless.

Bart was listening intently. He had got the man to talk, now it would come out with the occasional aid of a word or two.

"I broke down in court to-day because I believed Connelly to be innocent. I knew he was, and yet dared not say so."

"But you were positive he was the man a week ago!"

"Just so. And now I am equally sure he is innocent."

"But when did you arrive at this conclusion?"

"Last night. Listen to me. I went to bed as usual. About midnight I was awakened by a bright light shining in my face. I tried to start up, but felt something cold at my throat and knew it to be a knife."

"'The slightest sound and I finish you,' said the man who bent over me. It was a powerful electric light he held in his hand, and I could see him distinctly, for he bent his face close to mine so that I should see it in the light of the lantern he held. It was the face of the man with whom I had my death struggle months ago."

"The burglar!" exclaimed Abney.

"Yes, it was the same man. I could never mistake him. The prisoner resembled him closely, it is true, but it is clearly a case of mistaken identity."

"My midnight visitor held the sharp edge of a razor to my throat as he leant over me and whispered hoarsely: 'You are going to back out at the last moment, you pigeon-livered fossil, and swear that Connelly is not the man. I know your game. But don't you do it. He has got to go up in my place, do you understand? I don't want to be hunted by the police, and if he goes up I shall be left in peace. He's innocent, but no matter, he's got to go up, and if you don't convict him, you will find me at your bedside one night, and I'll finish you just so, with this razor. Now you understand.'

"Look here," Mr. Catling raised his chin and showed a raw line around his throat where the razor had been made to cut through the skin. "You see it is no nightmare I'm telling you. I've got that to remember his visit by.

"The man took his departure suddenly, and I instantly aroused the house, and Mr. Baker was in my room, when the front door closed behind the midnight visitor. I told him what had happened, and I regret to think that he counselled me to testify against Connelly to protect myself. It has been a horrible, crushing thought to me. I wanted to tell the truth in the box, but could not. I have done so now, but I know I shall pay for it with my life, unless you can catch the right man, Mr. Hocking. Guard myself as I may, that man will yet stand beside my bed, and I shall awake to meet death with his knife."

"I wish you would let me have the number of those bank notes," said Bart, taking out a vest pocket memorandum book.

"The first man that moves gets a taste of lead," said Bart.

Mr. Catling produced his pocket-book and handed a slip therefrom to the detective, the numbers were soon copied.

"Find the money, and half of it is yours, Mr. Hocking," said Mr. Catling, generously.

"Thank you," replied Bart. "I hope to get it and the man too. Go to your home, Mr. Catling, without any fear whatever. Rest assured that your house is in my care and no one can enter to do you harm."

"It is a comforting thought, Mr. Hocking," rejoined Mr. Catling, "and I feel safe already."

NOVEL

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When, a little later, the three men emerged from the Ship Tavern, Mr. Catling hailed a cab and was driven home.

The detective and the Q.C. went towards Charing Cross, where they turned into the Strand, both very silent for some little time.

"What do you think about the story of the midnight visitor?" asked Abney at last.

"I think—it is—all right," replied Hocking in slow, measured tones.

"It wasn't a nightmare?"

"No. I believe it happened and I am going to base my searches somewhat upon that event. At present it is the most mysterious and difficult phase of the subject."

"What is your opinion about the prisoner may I ask?"

"He is acquitted and is out of our power, since he cannot be tried for this charge again," replied Bart, "but I intend to give him a little personal attention. Yet if he is innocent why should Levingham patch up that hasty marriage between him and the girl? Levingham is a scoundrel and I'll brand him with a broad arrow, yet."

"I'm glad to hear that you know something of the man's real character. I know it is as black as the ace of spades, but he is too shrewd to be caught. I wish you could get sufficient evidence against him to have him suspended. At present he is a disgrace to the bar."

Bart nodded.

"I'll call on you, if I get hold of anything interesting," he said.

"By all means, any hour of the day or night," replied Abney producing a card.

"I know your house in Berkeley Square well," said Bart smiling, for there was not a prominent man in London, whose business and private address were unknown to the detective. What is more, with most of them he knew at what hour they were most likely to be found at either place.

The two men parted at Southampton Street, Bart going towards and crossing Covent Garden market, and threading his way through the maze of narrow and dirty streets beyond.

III.

THE TRAP THAT WAS LAID AND SPRUNG.

Two days passed, and nothing happened to the principals in this case. At least nothing that was known to all of them. It had almost passed from Mr. Abney's mind, in the stress of business, and Mr. Catling's friends made his life as bright and cheerful as they could. But with Bart it was different. A good deal had happened, though it was known only to him.

Towards nine o'clock on the evening of the second day after the meeting of the three men in the Ship Tavern, a closed carriage drove up to the Abney house in Berkeley Square. Bart Hocking ran quickly up the steps, and to the servant who opened the door, handed a card which he had produced while waiting for the door to be opened after his ring.

The next moment Abney came forward holding Bart's card. The distinguished barrister was dressed and just ready to go out.

"If you can spare the time, come," said Bart. "And you can be in at the death; my carriage is waiting. You shall see a pretty evening's work."

Abney at once assented and the two men went out together and entered the carriage.

"St. Martin's le Grand, quick," said Bart to the driver, and away they rattled.

Not a word came from Bart as to where they were going or what was to happen. He discussed chiefly the latest plays the theatres had produced.

In front of the Post Office they both got out and Bart led the way towards Smithfield market. To find one's way about the narrow streets was more than puzzle enough, the barrister thought; to be able to trace a criminal to his lair in such a neighbourhood must require almost second sight.

Suddenly Bart stopped before the entrance to a house that was dark as Erebus. Opening a door with a key he produced, the two men stood inside in a dark hallway.

The barrister was vaguely conscious that there was a third person present with whom Bart had held two or three words of conversation in a whisper.

"It's all right," said Bart, in a low voice to Abney, then to someone else he said: "Let's have a sparkle, Catty."

From out of the darkness a faint ray of light shone ahead.

It was a ray from a dark lantern held by the invisible third person, whom Bart had addressed as Catty.

Bart took Abney's arm so as to guide him and prevent, if possible, any stumbling. They climbed three flights of stairs in the house, which seemed to be empty, and when they reached the top floor a little more light was brought to bear, and Bart pointed the way to the roof, which was reached by a ladder.

"What's all this?" asked Abney.

"We've got to get into a building two houses off," explained Bart, "that's what this means. It isn't safe to try to get an entrance in any other way, for if but a door or window is touched the fox in his den knows it."

The three went up on the roof and over another roof to the third building, where it was necessary to ascend a rope ladder in order to reach the roof, as it was somewhat higher than the other buildings.

When they got on the top of this, Abney detected the outline of a man against the black sky.

He approached Bart with the silence of a wraith, and whispered, "All clear."

It was necessary for the four men to descend through the fanlight of the other building which had been removed, and to descend two stories. Before doing this Bart had produced some sort of a covering for the feet; it was a felt slipper, which Abney put over his shoes, The others were already so protected.

The house was in darkness as they made their way down two flights of stairs. Then on the second story there was a ray of light visible in the hallway. It was seen to come from the transom over a door half-way down the hall.

Bart had already given full instructions in whispers, before they had descended to this floor. They moved now with noiseless tread and stood before the door. The transom had been covered with a cloth at one time but this had fallen away slightly at one corner, and gave a peep into the room.

Catty locked his hands and held them before him and Abney put his foot into them. He was raised from the ground with as much ease as he would have lifted a two-

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year-old child. He marvelled at the strength of the man who held him without a tremor. Then he put his eye to the opening and beheld—Levingham and Connelly!

There was a third man, but his back was turned to the door.

Only a great effort prevented Abney making an exclamation.

The men within were talking excitedly.

Levingham swore copiously.

"I won't yield a penny," he exclaimed. "It was agreed that I was to have half, and you two divide the remainder. I've done good work in this case and I'm entitled to it."

"Not a bit of it," cried Connelly, huskily, "a third's all you'll get."

Part of the money lay on the table. It was the half that Levingham had counted out for the two men. The other half he had safely in his pocket.

They argued and swore, and almost came to blows over the matter, when Catty put Abney down safely, and raised Bart instead. The detective held a revolver in one hand, and, with the other deftly moved the transom. It was one of the kind that worked on a sort of axle set in the centre at each side, so that as he raised it, he rested his hand on the top of the door and steadied his pistol.

"The first man that moves gets a taste of lead," said Bart, in calm, even tones. "Steady! Keep still or I fire!" This last admonition was yelled at the men as they started suddenly upon the first sound of his voice.

They stood two of them glaring at that shining pistol, the third had not dared to turn his head. They knew that it was the voice of Bart Hocking they heard, and their faces became livid with rage as they realized they were trapped.

Bart's assistant put a jemmy in the door and with a crash it quickly yielded; then, as he entered the room, he covered the men with a revolver, while Bart got down and entered the room with Catty and the barrister.

It was then the third man was seen face to face, and it brought an exclamation from Abney.

"Henry Harton!" he exclaimed.

"You know him, I see," remarked Bart significantly.

"Certainly, he is one of the turnkeys at Newgate."

"Does the fact enlighten you at all as to the mystery?" asked Bart.

"No."

"Then I will explain. It is through this man's connivance that the prisoner has been able to be out of prison whenever he chose. It was in this way he visited Mr. Catling at midnight, when it was supposed he was in prison. The two burglars were really the one man. Catty, secure the prisoners and the money. Call out the number of the notes and I'll see if they compare with these."

Bart referred to his note book.

They were found all right.

The legal instinct was not crushed in Levingham, even if he was in a bad hole, and he exclaimed:

"But you cannot arrest my client, he has been acquitted."

"Bah!" said Bart, contemptuously, "then I arrest him for being in bad company. But I've got a worse charge than that. I arrest you, Henry Connelly, for the murder of the Hon. George Catling!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Levingham.

"Not in the case in which you are concerned," returned Bart, drily, "he died this evening at 7.30 from the effects of complications which set up in the wound he received."

The three men were soon safely under lock and key, and Bart, after giving his two assistants some instructions, got into a cab with the barrister and was driven to his town residence, which consisted of a suite of rooms in Whitehall Court.

Abney, at the detective's request, accompanied him, and the two talked over the clever capture, for about an hour.

"How, Mr. Hocking, did you ever achieve such a result in so short a time? Is the method of your work a professional secret?" asked the barrister, in unmistakable admiration.

"No," replied Bart, modestly. "I don't mind telling you. This case was particularly easy, which seldom happens, and it was so because of Mr. Catling's second visitation by the burglar.

"A detective's work is largely a matter of skilful deduction, as you no doubt are aware. In this case Mr. Catling had identified Connelly as the burglar. At the trial he did not deny it, and also he did not affirm it. When he made his confession to us, the first solution to the mystery to my mind was to determine whether Connelly was his midnight visitor in both instances, or whether there was another man. If the latter then undoubtedly Connelly was innocent. He was confined in Newgate, therefore it was necessary for me to know whether it was possible for him to be absent from that institution when he should not have been.

"It was a simple matter to find who had been his keeper in prison. Shadowing this man led me to Connelly, and keeping the latter in view led to Levingham, and of course the whole thing was as simple as A B C."

"But how about Connelly on his second visit threatening Mr. Catling as he did? Would it not have seemed the wisest course for him to have threatened the man's life if he had testified against the prisoner in court?" asked Abney.

"Not with such shrewd customers as these," replied Bart, to whom all men's minds were as an open book. "The scheme was, no doubt, one of Levingham's own. He figured rightly that Mr. Catling had a conscience and that if he believed the prisoner innocent nothing could compel him to testify to send the man to the penitentiary even to save his own throat from the knife of the midnight assassin."

"Remarkable!" exclaimed Abney, in compliment to Bart's wonderful powers. Then he added: "I shall not rest until these rascals have received the utmost punishment the law provides."

And he worked so hard that Connelly got twenty years, Levingham got six years, and his name stricken from the Bar, and the bribed turnkey got eighteen months.

"A very simple case, Mr. Abney," said Bart, when the latter was bidding him good-night. "I hope some time you will need my services in something more difficult."

"I have a most perplexing case in hand now, that has baffled all detective skill. I wish you would call at my chambers to-morrow, and I will give you the particulars."

Which Bart promised to do, and the adventures that grew out of the affair may be told later on.

HAVE

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THE FATE OF MICHAEL STANDRIDGE

By HEADON HILL.

Author of "The Peril of the Prince," "Seaward for the Foe," "Guilty Gold," etc.

CHAPTER XII. (*continued*).

Two minutes later, when he bustled into the private room with the stewed pigeons, there was not a more obliging waiter in the metropolis than Carlo's substitute. There were again indications of an abrupt change of subject, and it took the form of a request by Mr. Hoathley to have his flask filled with brandy—at the bar. Luigi was in such a hurry to obey the order that he omitted to quite close the door behind him, though it certainly sounded as if it were shut to. So it was that in returning with the replenished flask another particle of talk reached him on the stairs. It was Tasker, who said:

"What about conveying the stuff afterwards? It will be a good load."

And the other replied: "That is all arranged. I have engaged a——"

But here he broke off as the waiter entered, and made a remark on the fineness of the evening, to which Tasker assented with great cordiality. Mr. Hoathley, who was eating his dinner with gusto, kept one eye on his plate and the other on the flask as Luigi brought it to him. If he had possessed a third wherewith to scan the waiter's face he would have noticed sooner that the latter's gaze was concentrated on two or three dark smears on the white damask of the table-cloth, on the left side of his plate.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the waiter, in his fawning broken English, "I mooch 'fraid you cut your hand. See, table-cloth quite bloody."

The elder diner examined his wrist with an exclamation of annoyance, and cocked his nearest eye knowingly at Tasker.

"Quite right, waiter," he said; "I cut my wrist a week ago, and it doesn't heal as quickly as I thought—as it ought, I should say. The sticking-plaster has come off and caused this unpleasantness on your snowy linen. Ah, thanks—thank you very much. You are really an estimable fellow."

For the waiter had produced from his pocket a case of court-plaster, a bit of which he applied deftly and gently to the cut, thus obtaining a nearer inspection of the injury—a shallow cut about half-an-inch long, that might have been done with a pen-knife. It was in reality a mere scratch, and would have been healed before in a thoroughly healthy patient.

By nine o'clock the public room was nearly emptied of diners, most of whom had either left altogether or were congregated at the bar, holding a high parliament on the day's racing or the latest new burlesque. The waiter, therefore, had more time to devote to the *tête-à-tête* party upstairs, and he gave no ground of complaint on the score of inattention. At about half-past nine he received an order to bring the bill, together with coffee and cigars, to obtain which he had to apply to Tamponi in the bar.

The signor, who was deep in conversation with a couple of sporting men and a music-hall artist, told him to go and turn down the gas in the now-deserted public room, and come back for the bill and the coffee. The moment his back was turned, one of the sporting men—a fashionably-dressed, coarse-featured individual, known as "Big Harry"—leant over the counter, and addressed a few whispered words to Tamponi, who started, and looked after the retreating waiter. "Big Harry" repeated his confidential communication to the other sporting man and to the artist, with the result that while the four heads were put together in hushed excitement there was a momentary cessation in the hilarious chatter which had preceded Luigi's appearance. It lasted but a second or two. When the waiter came back, the conversation had been restored to its original channel, only it was carried on, perhaps, in a slightly higher pitch.

"Here you are," said Tamponi; "here is the tray. Stay, though," he added, as if it was an afterthought, "I will take it up myself." And, suiting the action to the word he took the tray and disappeared with it up the stairs. He was back in less than a minute and resumed his interrupted talk, but an eloquent flash passed from Tamponi's bright Italian eyes to those of his customer's, which a keen observer might have attributed to something of deeper interest than the successful bet of "Big Harry's" that was under discussion.

Meanwhile the waiter, while being temporarily relieved of his duty by the proprietor, had wandered off to the backroom, where he proceeded to employ himself after the manner of his kind in flicking the empty tables with his napkin. Five minutes passed, and then he was recalled to more serious work by the ringing of the bell from the private room. Luigi's was one of those faces which did not readily express astonishment, but a look of surprise certainly wrinkled his brow when, on ascending the stairs, he was met by the tinkling of the cracked piano and the quavering tones of the elder guest rising and falling in an inharmonious attempt to render "Annie Rooney."

"They have had a fair amount of liquor," he said to himself, "but surely not enough to throw them off the line."

On entering the room he found Tasker seated at the piano, while Mr. Hoathley, with his necktie unfastened and his legs outstretched under the table, was leaning back in his chair choking out the words of the popular ditty.

EVER

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"The Cat's Paw"

is the title of a charming new Serial Story which starts in

NEXT SATURDAY

6d.

THE LADY'S MAGAZINE FOR JUNE.

"Dear old boy! Good old waiter!" hiccoughed Tasker, turning round on the stool. "Getsh some candles for piano, there's a good old chappy. My frensh old—beastly old. Can't see words without music, can't see music without light. You know wharra mean. Getsh some piano candles, there's a good old Macaroni."

Luigi moved towards the door, but on his way, Mr. Hoathley caught him by the lapel of his coat and whispered vinously, in his most paternal manner:

"You must 'scuse the young gentleman's rudeness, waiter; he's a little festive, you see. That grand old port of yours is so 'zileratin'. Besht to humour them when they get like that, isn't it?"

"A new development this," thought the waiter, as he went rather slowly down the stairs in quest of the candles. "What does it mean, I wonder? It's close on ten now; if they are really going to make a night of it the job has been postponed, I suppose."

When he returned there was a change in the position of the convivial pair. Tasker was still seated at the piano, thumping vigorously in the niche by the fireplace, but his guest had left the table and was leaning against the mantelpiece, to which he had transported his glass and bottle of wine. Croning out snatches from a piece of music selected from a tattered pile on the piano, he was apparently waiting for the candles before commencing in earnest.

"Ah, here is our friend with the lights," he exclaimed, regarding Carlo's substitute with a satyr-like leer of repletion. "Stick them in, please, waiter, and then go and fetch another bottle of port. This one is a dead man, I think."

As he spoke he took the bottle from the mantelpiece, and holding it up, looking critically at it, as though to see if it were really empty. At the same moment the waiter passed between him and the piano and began to fit the candles into the sconces on the instrument. Hoathley's attitude changed as if by magic.

The drunken smirk was replaced with a tigerish glare, as with the quickness of a juggler, he shifted his grasp from the body to the neck of the bottle, and whirled it high in the air, to come crashing down with a sickening thud on the stooping waiter's skull.

The man toppled right across the piano, jangling the notes discordantly, and, nearly knocking Tasker off the stool, rolled limply to the floor, where he lay like a log, face upwards.

"So much for Mr. Detective Zambra," said Hoathley, bending over the prostrate form. "I should like to knife the brute, but it might complicate matters. However, I think I've taken the wind out of his sails for quite long enough to give us a free hand. Get your hat and coat, Tasker. A quick cab will take us to Paddington just in time for the 10.30. Once in it we get a long start, for the telegraph offices have long been closed, and there is no later train to Reading to-night."

In another minute the room was deserted, save by the silent figure lying motionless by the piano.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Night of Terror.

After Zambra's departure Marion began to feel the loneliness of her position in a more marked degree. So far she had been buoyed up by the excitement of consulting the detective, and of herself to some small extent assisting his investigation. But now that the case had been lifted clean out of the region of her capabilities, and she was left with nothing to do but watch and wait, her nerves yielded a little to the pressure. Suffering from this reaction, she found the ensuing evening and night in the silent house more of an ordeal than she had expected, and she gladly welcomed the morning which would at least bring her companionship in the man whom Zambra was to send to dismantle the strong room.

He came about ten o'clock—a stalwart, quiet ex-policeman, who had learnt the use of pick and trowel in earlier days as a pioneer-sergeant in the Guards, and was now a valued member of Zambra's staff. The detective had the faculty of laying his hand on the right man for particular services, the consequence being that he was the centre of a little band of followers, each as nearly as possible perfect in his own line, and one of which was pretty certain to be able to cope with any emergency that might arise.

Neil Fergusson set to work without waste of time, and the brickwork quickly began to crumble before the attack of his crowbar and pickaxe. Marion was in and out of the cellar all the morning, more for the sake of company than impelled by an overwhelming wish that the money should be found; for from the first she had recognised that such a discovery would, after all, be but a secondary matter which could not of itself establish Cuthbert's innocence. But as the work of demolition proceeded, and bit by bit the heavy masses of brickwork came clattering down in a smother of dust, her anxiety grew apace, and she could not repress her disappointment at the futility of Fergusson's efforts.

For when at length the brawny Scotchman emerged from the *débris* and flung his crowbar aside, the strong room stood revealed as just what it professed to be—a solidly-built chamber, and nothing more. The floor had been cemented on to the original flags of the cellar, just as the sides had been built on to the foundation walls of the house, with not so much as space for a mouse to run between. No secret hiding-place was unearthed; no buried hoard came to light. Zambra was at fault. What if he should also miss the mark in the more important branch of the inquiry?

Marion let fall some doubts of the kind, and was gravely rebuked by Fergusson, whose faith in his chief was invincible.

"Dinna ye fash yourself aboot that, miss," he said. "Mortal man can't tell what's working in the governor's brain. It's like as not he knew it all along."

But Marion shook her head, and after Zambra's henchman had gathered up his tools and left for town to report at the office her spirits sank lower still. And later on in the afternoon her depression was increased by the receipt of a note from Mr. Oakley telling her that Cuthbert Blakesly had been brought up on the remand that morning, and after a lengthy hearing had been committed for trial at the Assizes.

As at the inquest, the evidence of the Public Analyst that

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the spot of blood on the bicycle was human blood, had carried conviction that the whole of the story put forward for the defence was a fabrication. The kindly manager bade her keep heart, and enumerated the efforts that were being made in her lover's behalf, but he closed his letter with one crushing fact that made his comfort seem but cold indeed. The Assizes would commence in ten days. But ten days remained to achieve the only real defence that could save Cuthbert's life—the tracking of those stealthy footsteps that must have crept guiltily from Kennett's Cross that fatal night.

Marion's fears were further aggravated by Zambra's silence. He had promised to communicate with her the moment he had any definite information, but he had made no sign since his departure the previous day. Fergusson had told her that he had received final instructions from his chief early that morning, and that Zambra had intimated that he would be engaged on the Kennett's Cross case all day, but he had not taken his subordinate into further confidence. All that the Scotchman knew, or was inclined to say, was that he had been ordered to report at the office on his return to town. In her impatience Marion forgot that barely twenty-four hours had elapsed since Zambra started on what her father would have called a "blind trail," and so came to the conclusion that he had been as unsuccessful in tracing out the inner meaning of the Worcester Park postmark as he had been in the matter of the strong room.

When night came down again, enshrouding the gloomy house in darkness, Marion had worked herself into such a pitch of nervous excitement that sleep seemed out of the question. The fact was—though she would never have confessed it—that the solitude and ghastly associations of the place were telling upon the girl's mind, and the uneasiness which she herself attributed to anxiety on Cuthbert's account, was in truth partly due to the horror of her own situation. She would have given the world for someone to talk to. Every groan and creak of the worm-eaten rafters began to have a new significance for her, and in the black recesses of the deserted rooms there seemed to lurk unspeakable possibilities of the Unseen.

It was not till nearly midnight that Marion extinguished the lamp in the sitting-room and went upstairs to bed. But once in the bedroom she could not bring herself to undress, so flung herself down, just as she was, to toss about and wonder over and over again what Zambra was doing, and whether the morrow would bring her news from him. She had lain thus for over an hour when she was reminded sharply that she had not made preparations for a night of wakefulness. Her candle guttered down in the socket, and, casting weird shadows on the ceiling with its expiring flickers finally went out, leaving her in total darkness. Marion turned over on the pillow and spent another half-hour in trying to compose herself to sleep, but in vain, and then suddenly her heart stood still for she knew that a great peril was upon her.

Very slowly, very gently, but with a faint scrooping sound of the rusty mechanism that she could not mistake, the handle of her bedroom door was turned. There followed a pause of some ten seconds—it seemed ten years to Marion lying there—and then there was a slight push, which told her that the door had been tried, only to meet with a prompt check from the strong iron bolt of her father's fitting, which she had luckily shot home on retiring. In the face of an imminent danger Marion's high courage steadied her nerves in an instant. She slipped noiselessly from the bed, and, stealing across the room to the door, strained her ears to catch the slightest sound. Soft and regular, there rose and fell on the other side a gentle wheezing, so restrained as to be almost inaudible, but sufficiently distinct to a close listener to leave no doubt of its origin. It was the breathing of the person who had tried the door.

Marion clasped her hands to still her heart's wild beating. Fear had left her, but her whole being was thrilled with the conviction that by that thin partition alone was she

DANGERS OF OBESITY.

EXTRAORDINARILY SUCCESSFUL TREATMENT.

A great authority on corpulency, its causes and its cure, calls attention to certain vital facts which all of us who are inclined to undue stoutness would do well to ponder over with the utmost seriousness. Obesity is not merely an unwelcome and uncomely physical development; it is a grave menace to health. An accumulation of fat may occur upon the muscles of the heart or around the kidneys, and persons in this condition are extremely liable to have these vital organs impaired, whereby disaster is invited. Mr. F. Cecil Russell, the well-known specialist, from whose book, "Corpulency and the Cure," we glean our facts, says: "Those who suffer from *polysarcia omenti*, that is an accumulation of abdominal subcutaneous fat, sometimes several inches in depth, carry also an enormous weight of fat around the internal organs, and are prone to the complaints known as fatty degeneration of the heart and liver." How may this state of things be remedied? Mr. Russell shows us the way. By the author's treatment we may positively lose two stone in about a month, with the greatest possible benefit in health and strength, muscle and brain. Paradoxical as it may seem, the process of reduction is accompanied by increase of appetite and greater digestive activity, so that whilst more food is required and vigour and vitality are thereby increased, the body grows less and less in weight to the extent of from ½lb. to 2lb. a day, as the test of the weighing machine will demonstrate. The treatment is absolutely harmless, and involves no discomfort or inconvenience, no irritating restrictions, no weakening cathartics. It is an unquestioned and unquestionable success, and the author, who has devoted years of study to the subject, guarantees a noticeable reduction within 24 hours of commencing the treatment, which aims at the very root of obesity, so that the superfluous fat does not return when the treatment is discontinued. To judge from the records of nearly a thousand cases in which the patients themselves have testified in writing to the marvellous effects of the regimen, Mr. Russell is to be heartily congratulated upon the practical results of his study and research. We advise our readers to call the attention of stout friends to this, because, sincerely, we think they ought to know. For their information we may say, that on sending 2d. in stamps the book, "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pages), containing a reprint of Press notices from some hundreds of medical and other journals—British and foreign—and other interesting particulars, including the "recipe," can be had (post free) from Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.

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In order that corpulent readers of *Short Stories* may have an opportunity of testing the marvellous efficacy of the compound which forms the basis of the "Russell" treatment, it has been decided to set apart a certain number of SPECIALLY PREPARED 6s. CASES to be distributed for the NOMINAL SUM of 2/6 amongst the earliest applicants mentioning this publication and sending to the address below, postal orders for 2/6.

Full directions for following the treatment will accompany each test case, also F. C. Russell's well-known book, "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pages. The whole will be forwarded, carriage paid to the applicants in the British Isles. *This exceptional offer remains open for twenty-one days from the date of this publication.*

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separated from the key to the mystery of Kennett's Cross. Zambra must have been right in his surmise that her father's murderer had gone empty away on the night of the crime. But something over and above the detective's anticipations had happened. The terrible Unknown, seeing by the published reports that the strong-room had been devoid of plunder, must have come to the same conclusion as Zambra—that Michael Standridge had hedged in his hoard by some deeper scheme. Knowing that his coming would now be unlooked for, and that the house was only occupied by a helpless girl, he must have returned with dreadful persistence to unearth the hidden gold at all hazards.

The breathing continued for nearly a minute, and then the sound on the other side of the door somewhat altered in character. It became a gentle sibilation, lasting a considerable time, but intermittent and irregular. Marion, with her ear glued to the panel, recognised the importance of the change at once. She had two foes to contend with and the slight hissing noise was a whispered conference as to their next plan of attack.

Suddenly the whispering ceased, and the silence was followed by a distant creak, which Marion knew from the experience of the last few days proceeded from a loose board at the far end of the western passage. The lurkers had retired from the door, and were going the rounds of the empty bed-rooms. Her resolution was taken on the instant. She would slip out of the house while the intruders were still upstairs, and run to Wilmington, where she could procure help to capture those whom she suspected to be guilty of worse than robbery. Cautiously withdrawing the bolt, she stepped out on to the landing, half-expectant that hands might be laid on her. But no; all around was in pitch darkness. But at the end of the passage she caught a faint gleam of light, as from a closed bulls-eye lantern, which showed that those she had to dread were engaged elsewhere.

Quickly and silently closing the bedroom door behind her, she began to descend the stairs, when again the warning creak in the passage told her that the midnight prowlers were returning.

It was too late to think of going back to the bedroom, and it was still possible that she might reach the front door undiscovered.

With great presence of mind she continued her way in that direction. Her chief hope was that the persons, whoever they might be, would not again try her bedroom door, and finding her gone take measures to prevent her escape before she had time to unfasten the elaborate series of bolts and chains with which Michael had fortified the front door.

She had no idea how the entry had been effected, but she knew that it could not have been by that way, as she had bolted and chained the door before going up to bed.

One other chance there was—that her assailants might have themselves unfastened the front door in order to facilitate their own escape in the event of being disturbed.

Both these chances were denied to her. She traversed the dark hall and reached the front door, to find it just as she had left it. At the same moment, just as she was commencing to pull the first of the heavy bolts, there fell upon her ears from the direction of the top of the stairs a sound that sickened her more than ruffian shouts or pistol shots could have done. It was the pad, pad, pad of shoeless footfalls, and it meant that she was too late. The marauders had passed her bedroom without trying it a second time, and so quick had been their progress that the omission, instead of aiding her escape, bade fair to prevent it. They were making straight for the hall. They would descend the stairs and be upon her before she could undo half the cumbrous fastenings. To attempt to remove the chains would mean certain discovery; they jangled at the slightest touch.

With not a second left for deliberation, Marion acted on an instinct of immediate self-preservation, and glided noiselessly into the left-hand unfurnished sitting-room, the door of which was luckily open. In a moment she was glad that she had made this choice in preference to the used room on the other side of the hall, for standing behind the door, she was able to make out that her own parlour was the destination of those who came from above. Thither the stealthy footfalls were directed, and as they suddenly ceased a smell of hot japanned metal and burning oil reached Marion's hiding-place. At the same moment she heard a whisper:

"Better open this infernal thing, hadn't we? It stinks fit to choke one, and the light can't reach her from down here. Besides, she's asleep, isn't she?"

Marion started as a second whisper made reply in a style that seemed strangely familiar.

"My researches at the entrance of the maiden's bower led me to believe that she slumbers," said the voice. "There is something very touching, my Swinley, in the slumber of a maiden, especially when, as I strongly opine in this case, it happens to be her last slumber. Open the lantern by all means, but take care that the light doesn't fall on the blind. It is well to be cautious, though I dare swear there is none within a mile."

As he finished, a dull light sprang up in the opposite room, and Marion, peering through the door crack, saw a sight which lifted the scales from her eyes and filled her soul with a loathing horror, not only of the object of her gaze, but of the trusting weakness with which she had yielded herself to deception.

Standing by the table in the opposite room, his fixed eye burning luridly in the subdued light of the dark-lantern, was the person who had gained her confidence as "Uncle Simon." With him was a tall young man, not wholly ill-looking, but of sinister expression, whom she did not remember to have seen before.

The latter seemed to be somewhat averse to the awful crime foreshadowed in the villainous suggestion of his companion.

"You are still bent on the extreme course, then?" he said. "As I have told you all along, I don't see the necessity for it, and you mustn't expect me to help you in anything of the kind."

"My young friend, Tasker," replied Hoathley, "when I was down here the other day for the double purpose of having a further look round and of recovering the envelope, I saw enough of the young lady to know that she is likely to be dangerous. The mere fact of her setting Zambra on the trail should convince you of that."

"A lot of good it's done her," muttered Tasker.

"More by luck than judgment, we have laid him by the heels for to-night," continued Hoathley, driving Marion's last hope away, "but I cannot afford to allow this unscrupulous young person to make use of him or similar instruments in future. Besides, you have never properly taken in that I am in reality a kind of relative of the late lamented Michael. If you had, you would see that in any case there is another reason why this girl should be extinguished. We have not got the treasure yet. Supposing we do not find it at all in the limited time at our disposal? Well, in that case, it will probably be hit upon by accident in the future—this old place will be pulled down, or something of the sort—in which event, Miss Marion out of the way, I can bob up serenely, as though from a prolonged absence abroad, and claim, as her next-of-kin, the money of which my amiable half-brother was so anxious to deprive me."

"That's all very well," returned Tasker, sullenly, "but if by chance the game miscarries to-night, and the haul is deferred in the way you mention, where do I come in? When I consented to put you up to Standridge's whereabouts you told me I was to have half the stuff down on the nail for my assistance. How do I know that you will shell out if the money comes to you lawfully at some future period as heir at law?"

(*To be continued.*)

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Short Stories That . . . . . Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a Stereoscope to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, June 10th. Postcards only, please. The prize of One Guinea has been awarded this week to Mr. A. M. Miller, 29 Mile End Avenue, Aberdeen, whose contribution is denoted by a star thus.*

PA: "What's baby crying for, Dolly?" Dolly: "Just 'cos I showed her how to eat her cake."

"DOBBS made a lot of money this season." "How?" "He got out road maps for all the floors in our big department stores."

GRAHAM: "I say, old man, why did the barmaid ale?" Thomson (after pondering awhile): "Give it up." Graham: "Because the stout porter bitter."

BARBER (insinuatingly): "Your hair is a trifle thin, sir." Victim (grimly): "So is your chance of selling me a bottle of your hair restorer."

ALGERNON (making a call): "What are these noises I hear, Miss Maud?" Miss Maud (whose mother is vindictively making a wholly unnecessary noise in washing the dishes): "It's dear mamma. She dearly loves to sort over the *bric-à-brac*."

MR. ANDJERRY: "I don't know what to do with our Tommy. He's only ten, and incorrigible. Do you know anything that will break a haughty spirit?" Mr. Hites (sadly): "Yes. Make him wheel the baby in a perambulator as the other boys are coming out of school."

A STUDENT in one of our universities had just started for a stroll down the street when he remembered that his fire was very low when he left his room. Not wishing to return to a fireless room, he hurried back, and soon made up a good fire. Setting out again, he noticed some of the people turning round to look at him, and laughing. Presently a party of boys who came along shouted out: "Just look at his cane!" On looking down, what was his horror to discover that he had been carrying the poker instead of his walking-stick!

*THE manager of a music-hall in the North, who, although a most illiterate man, prided himself not a little on his oratorical powers, made it a practice every Saturday night to announce the leading items of the following week's bill of fare. One evening he finished his weekly speech in the following remarkable terms: "Last but not least, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to inform you that at an enormous expense I have exclusively engaged the marvellous Bormdee Brothers, the world-famed acrobats, to appear here in their celebrated entertainment for six nights, commencing Monday next. Understand, ladies and gentlemen, the Bormdee Brothers, the champion acrobats of the world." Here he paused for a moment to regain his breath, and then with an impressive wave of his forefinger, proudly continued: "Yes; and what's more, on Monday week we've got a troupe coming what can knock 'em into a cocked hat!"

"ALL that I want," said Mr. O'Tool, "is peace. And by jabers I'll have that if I have to fight every man and woman in the parish."

MRS. SLIMDIET (to new boarder): "This is pound-cake, Mr. Starver." New Boarder (carefully lifting a piece): "What did you pound it with?"

MISTRESS: "Bridget, I hope you don't light the fires with paraffin oil?" Cook: "Never a bit, mum! Oi wets it down wid paraffin oil an lights it wid a match."

"THIS is my son Frederick, Mr. Fosdick," said Mr. Glanders proudly, introducing his five-year-old boy to his caller. "Well, Frederick," said the caller, "do you obey your mamma?" "Yes, sir," replied Frederick promptly, "and so does papa."

TEACHER: "Jimmy, if you found eighteen pennies and another boy should take two-thirds of them away, what would each of you have?" Jimmy: "I'd have six pennies, an' he'd have a good thumpin' 'less he'd handed back the rest of 'em mighty quick."

CUSTOMER: "And is this chair really an antique piece of furniture?" Dealer: "Antique, madam! There's no doubt about that. Why, it was so worm-eaten when I bought it that I had to have a new back, and a new seat, and three new legs made for it."

IT is always better for a boy not to smoke, but it is not often that the small smoker runs himself into difficulties so easily as one who was recently lounging about a railway-station. Presently he went up to the booking-office, and asked for a "half return" to a town a little distance up the line. "What! a small chap like you a-smoking?" said the clerk noticing the cigarette. "Who are you calling a small chap? I'm fourteen!" replied the boy indignantly. "Very well; full fare, then, please," was the clerk's only answer.

A FEW weeks ago the Glasgow Police Court was "set in a roar" by one of those "flashes of merriment" which occasionally relieve a depressing environment. The police had made a raid on an alleged betting establishment, and one of the delinquents was being examined by the presiding magistrate. Bailie: "What are you by trade?" Prisoner: "I'm a locksmith, your honour." Bailie: "Oh, you're a locksmith, are you? And what might you be doing when the officers arrested you?" Prisoner: "Making a bolt for the door, your honour."

THE ONE ALTERNATIVE.—"Mary," he said in desperation, "I shall wait no longer. Either you must consent to become my wife or end this farce. Your repeated delays are killing me." "Very well, Hubert," she answered calmly, "if you take that ground, there is but one alternative for me." She drew off the diamond ring which sparkled on her finger and handed it to him. He took it sadly and bitterly exclaimed: "Oh, false, cruel girl, to thus carelessly trample upon a heart whose every throb is for you alone! For this bauble I have no further use. Let it perish, as I hope may also the love of which it was the emblem." His hand was raised to throw the ring into the fire, but she grasped it quickly. "I merely wished to say, Hubert, that I would like you to have the wedding ring made just a trifle smaller than this."

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MR. GEO. R. SIMS'

Hair Renewer.

(Called by him "Tatcho" the Romany word for "genuine," "good," "true").

"DAILY MAIL" INTERVIEWS MR. GEO. R. SIMS.

A *Daily Mail* representative sought out Mr. Sims at Clarence Terrace, Regent's Park.

"When I discovered the preparation, I found that I had hit upon a remedy capable of working wonders," said Mr. Geo. R. Sims. "Look at my hair now. In time people got to know that I had discovered a renewer that had worked wonders in my own case. Then the trouble began.

"Letters in thousands poured in to me from men and women in every quarter of the world. The work of answering the letters was enormous, and it became quite evident that at the rate at which the demand was increasing I should very soon need a large staff of clerks to attend solely to the hair-renewer department of correspondence.

"In consequence, I said to myself, Why should this thing go on? If the public wants my hair restorer, the public shall have it; but the demand must be met in the ordinary business-like way. So I resolved to place the genuine article within reach of all."

To undertake the introduction of "Tatcho" to the public a wealthy syndicate has been formed, embracing several of the best-known scientific, literary and commercial names in London, and under the name of Geo. R. Sims Company is in a position to introduce "Tatcho" to the toilet-table of every member of the King's vast Empire.

Geo. R. Sims Company have therefore decided to distribute a quantity of large trial bottles of "Tatcho" to enable those who have not yet profited by Mr. Sims' discovery to do so. The Company does this in the belief that such distribution will enable the preparation to become more widely known, and will introduce it into every home in a more satisfactory manner than could be effected through unlimited puffing by advertisement. To enable you to participate in this distribution, cut out the coupon under Mr. Geo. R. Sims' portrait, and post to the Company's offices, with your name and address legibly written, accompanied by postal order for 1/10, in exchange for which you will receive, under plain cover, a large 4/6 trial bottle, post free.

This Coupon entitles the holder to one 4/6 size Large Trial Bottle of Mr. Geo. R. Sims' Hair Renewer for 1/10, post free.

S.S. JUNE 8th, 1901.

"TATCHO" is a brilliant spirituous tonic, the colour of whiskey, free from all grease. A sprinkle of a few drops on the scalp and five minutes with the brush daily work marvels with every head of hair, but more especially with those that have not received their quantum of care.

If you value your appearance—and who does not?—get a bottle of "TATCHO" to-day. It acts as an invigorating tonic. It stops the hair falling, creates a luxuriant growth, and imparts to it a bright and youthful lustre.

It is not a dye, and contains no colouring matter or any harmful ingredient.

GEO. R. SIMS CO., 81c Great Queen Street, Holborn, LONDON, W.

"Tatcho" is sold by Hairdressers, Chemists, and Stores throughout the World, in Bottles at 1s., 2s. 9d., and 5s.

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE.

Last week I endeavoured, by every means in my power, to draw your attention to the "G. D." I am now going to tell you what the mystic letters stand for. They are the initials of the best, the most intensely interesting, the most powerful, dramatic serial story ever penned. They stand for

"The Golden Dwarf."

Now, don't throw this paper down in disgust, and murmur, "Thought as much." You didn't, couldn't, and wouldn't "think as much" as this story involves. Doubtless you have before to-day been induced to read serial stories by means of insidious advertisements. But you have never in your whole life read such a wonderful story as "The Golden Dwarf." Its plot embodies the most fascinating mystery ever conceived by novelist's brain. Unravel it during the run of the first three or four instalments, and you will prove yourself worthy of the highest place in the Criminal Investigation Department.

"The Golden Dwarf" is a romance of the present day, and is written by Mr. R. Norman Silver. Those who read his "Keeper of Secrets" series will be glad to renew acquaintance with the creator of Mr. Hugo Pontifex,

"The Golden Dwarf" starts in *Short Stories* in the number to be published on June 25th. You will do well to order it of your newsagent beforehand. The demand is going to be phenomenal.

❦❦❦

If some good fairy godmother could tell the women of to-day that they might each choose one constituent of beauty, in addition to what they already possess, I believe a large majority would ask for the gift of a good figure with a slender waist. But, alas and alack! there are no fairies to be heard, save those of science, and they tell us that the corsets with which we have been wont to try to keep our figures trim are injurious to health, and that if we would be really beautiful in the matter of figure, we must actually get rid of all superfluous fat, and not try to squeeze it out of sight. How is it to be done? The clear answer is to be found in a little book written by Mr. F. Cecil Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, who has been scientifically studying the question for many years, making many experiments, and who can now show a record of thousands of cures that he has effected by his wonderful treatment of obesity. Let me advise all who desire to get and to retain a graceful figure, to send the above author two penny stamps to cover the postage of his book, "Corpulency and the Cure," which he will then give to anyone who asks for it.

❦❦❦

You tell me, "A. M. H.," that you are deeply in love with a young Irishman who seems very fond of you, though he has never told you so. You have known him for more than a year, and have been out with him on several occasions, but, although he has been very kind to you, he has never asked you to meet him again, nor remarked on what you wear, neither has he ever given you a present. He is twenty-one, and you think it time he thought of a young girl, and you know for a fact that he is not going out with anyone else. There is a young girl who has just come up from the country that he is friendly with, but she does not care for him. You want to know if he is to be your husband, as you have taken to him such a lot more than you have to anyone else. Well, "A. M. H.," I really do not see how I can tell any more than you can. I do not think, from what you tell me, that you ought to consider he cares for you any more than he does for anyone else, and you can only wait, and time will show whether he is to be anything more than a friend to you. I am glad you like *Short Stories*.

❦❦❦

"Jeni."—Etiquette varies in different countries. Thus: In Holland a lady is expected to retire precipitately if she should enter a shop or restaurant where men are congregated. She waits until they have transacted their business and departed.

Ladies seldom rise in Spain to receive a male visitor, and they rarely accompany him to the door. For a Spaniard to give a lady—even his wife—his arm while out walking is looked upon as a violation of propriety.

No Turk will ever enter a sitting-room with dirty shoes. The upper classes wear tight-fitting shoes with goloshes over them. The latter, which receive all the dirt and dust, are left outside the door. The Turk never washes in dirty water. Water is poured over his hands, so that when polluted it runs away.

In Syria the people never take off their hats or turbans when entering the house or visiting a friend, but they always leave their shoes at the door. There are no mats or scrapers outside, and the floors inside are covered with expensive rugs kept very clean, and in Moslem houses used to kneel upon while praying.

In Persia, among the aristocracy, a visitor sends notice an hour or two before calling, and gives a day's notice if the visit is one of great importance. He is met by servants before he reaches the house, and other considerations are shown him, according to relative rank. The left, and not the right, is considered the position of honour.

In Sweden, if you address the poorest person on the street you must lift your hat. To enter a reading-room or a bank with one's hat on is regarded as impolite.

TO CONTRIBUTORS.

I am open to consider original stories of any length from 1,500 to 4,000 words. The character of stories required may be best ascertained by a careful reading of the contents of the paper. All MSS. are dealt with promptly, and every effort is made to return rejected stories which are accompanied by stamped addressed envelopes. At the same time, I cannot hold myself responsible for MSS. accidentally lost. Communications of this kind should be addressed The Editor, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C.

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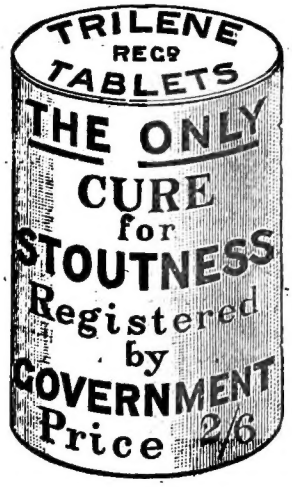
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

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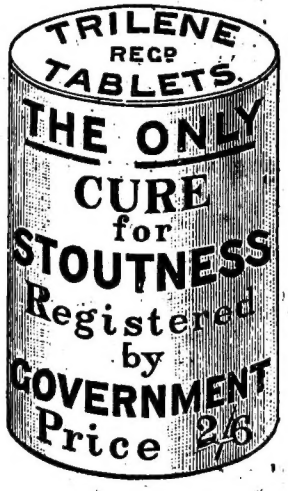

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me.

"Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mr. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 3lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

Mrs. DREW, of 1 Bellevue Gardens, The Nursery, Devizes, writes: "I took Tablets some years ago; they soon reduced me and I have not got stout since. Send me a box for my mother."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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Never travel without a box of BEECHAM'S PILLS. They prevent Nausea, Sea Sickness, and act as an alterative often necessary through change of air and diet. Without this specific a holiday is often spoilt through the system being deranged.

BEECHAM'S PILLS cleanse the stomach and bowels, and purify the blood, invigorate the whole nervous system, and give tone and energy to the muscles. In the preparation of BEECHAM'S PILLS the most scrupulous care is taken, and the ingredients form the most successful combination that has ever been discovered for Sick Headache, Constipation, Wind and Pains in Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver, Female Ailments, and all BILIOUS and NERVOUS DISORDERS.

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